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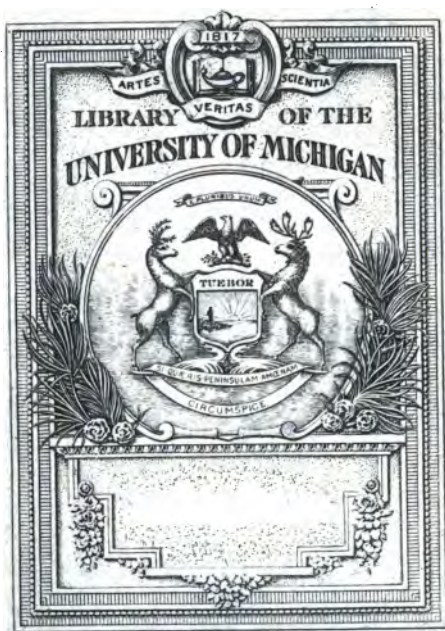
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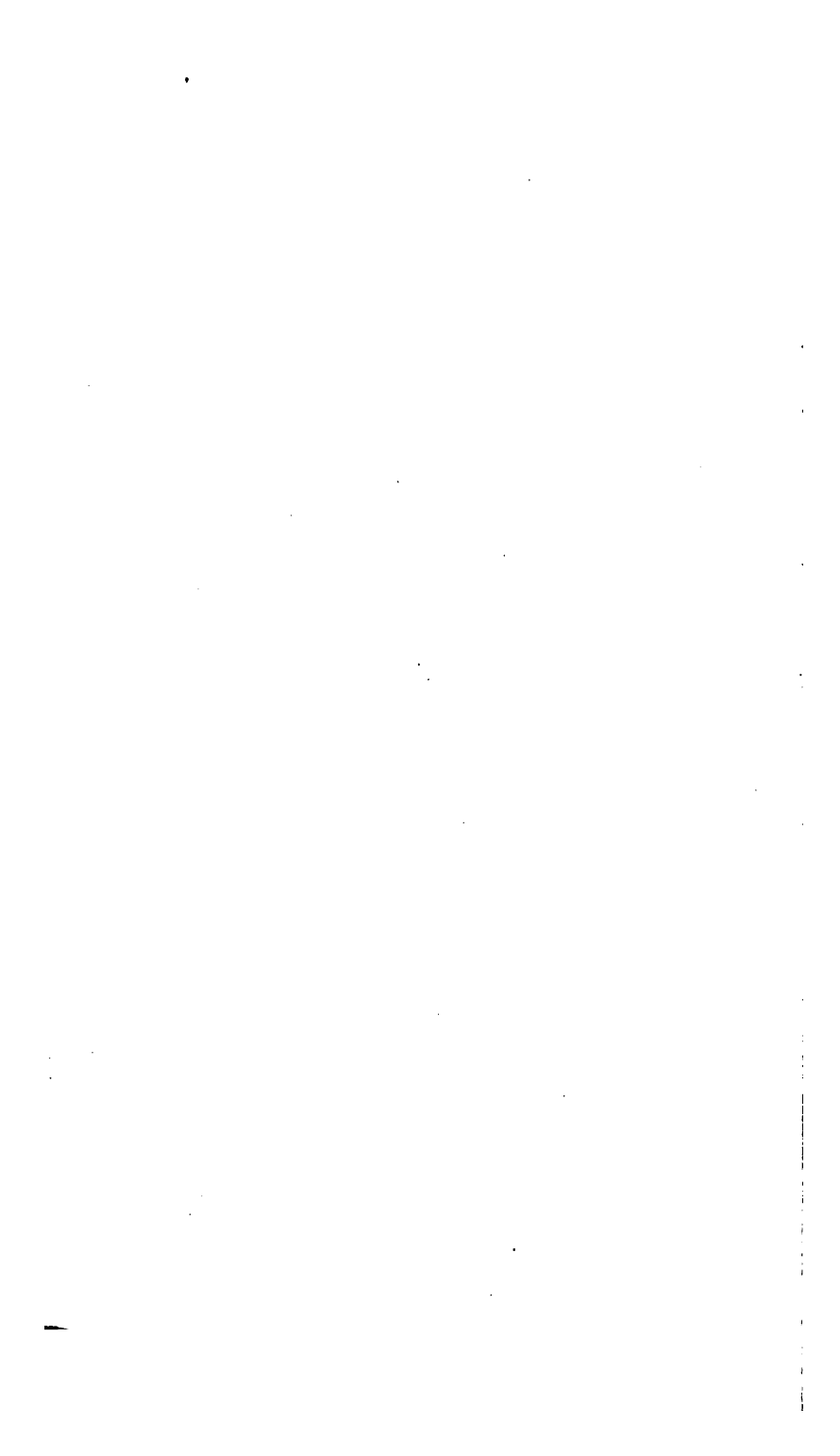
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Smith, Horatio

ADAM BROWN,

THE MERCHANT.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF BRAMBLETYE HOUSE, &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

“When novelty’s the rage, and love of change,
And things are doated on because they’re strange,
How shall he fare whose unaspiring hack
Jogs on the broadway and the beaten track,
Leaps o’er no moral fence, nor dares to prance
In the wild regions of untried romance?”

CHARLES MOORE.

VOLUME I.

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ADAM BROWN.

CHAPTER I.

THOUGH the village of Woodcote, situated at the foot of the Cotswold Hills in Gloucestershire, could lay no claim to picturesque beauty, there was in its immediate vicinity one object which might interest a traveller, especially if he happened to be an antiquarian. This was the Manor-House, at a short distance from the village, on the road to Charlton Abbots. Originally a monastic building of considerable extent, it presented the usual incongruous aspect of such edifices when they have been partly pulled down, and partly rebuilt, and patched, and altered by successive owners, each more solicitous

of adopting modern conveniences and improvements than of conforming to the antiquated style of the original building.

The rambling structure bewildered the eye by a succession of varying gables, some originally decorated by projecting frames of richly carved oak, surmounted by crotched pinnacles crowned with a cross, most of which enrichments had crumbled away, or suffered defacement, from the corrosions of time. Even the monster-faced stone corbels, on which the woodwork had once rested, had lost some portion of their grim ugliness, their abraded and discoloured features now inspiring compassion rather than aversion, especially when the rain, escaping from the decayed spouts, fell like tear-drops from their furrowed faces.

A large Gothic window with heavy stone mullions branching into trefoil and quatrefoil divisions, which had once given light to the refectory, imparted to the principal gable an air of dignity but ill supported by its neighbours, whose projecting latticed casements, receding loopholes, or flat modern

windows, peered forth from the massive walls with a comparative meanness. Above the centre of the steep ponderous roof stood, or rather tottered, the remains of a wooden belfry, a portion of which had either crumbled to decay, or had been blown down in some unremembered storm. The spacious fish-ponds of the garden, which had once supplied piscatory delicacies to the monks during Lent, and probably at all other times, had been long filled up; though the old brickwork of their margins was still visible. A sun-dial, minus the brass plate and gnomon, retained its place between them; and a colossal pigeon-house of stone, spite of its manifest dilapidation, looked as if it would defy the final assaults of time for ages yet to come. Around the whole domain, which was of considerable extent, ran a massive wall of rough stones, fortified at regular intervals by solid buttresses.

After the death of its last occupant (a certain Lady Mayhew), the right to this venerable mansion had been contested by two claimants, by whose disputes the property

was ultimately thrown into Chancery, and, in spite of the sneers and sarcasms which have associated that court with the notion of an almost interminable delay, candour compels us to admit that the process in question did not extend much beyond the term of nineteen years. In vindication of its decisions, we must also record that, although a verdict was given in favour of the wrong party, the fortunate gainer of the suit, who had previously been in good circumstances, was completely ruined by its expense, so that there was a species of retributive justice even in its erroneous judgment.

The impoverished owner of the Manor-House now offered it for sale; but, as it had assumed, from neglect during the litigation, a most forlorn and desolate appearance, no purchaser had appeared until about three weeks previous to the commencement of our history; when it had been bought, not without much sharp and strenuous haggling, by Adam Brown, a retired merchant, who, after giving orders for the hasty preparation of such apartments as he meant immediately

to occupy, was expected to arrive and take possession of his new property on the afternoon which we are proceeding to describe.

Towards the latter end of autumn, the breezes which had tempered the heat of a sultry day had subsided into a dead calm ; the setting sun, shooting its rays in the direction of the Cheltenham high road, imparted an appearance of fiery smoke to the dust thrown up by a flock of sheep wending to their fold ; the tops of the Cotswold Hills, burnished by the rays, shone out distinctly against the sky, while their lower ranges already began to be wreathed with ascending vapours ; crows were making their heavy way back to the Manor-House rookery ; horses and labourers were plodding wearily home from plough ; cows, indolently whisking off the flies, were dawdling to their homestead ; not a cloud moved above, not a leaf below ; it seemed as if the sky and the earth, exhausted by the fervours of the day, languidly awaited its decline, that they might enjoy the cool repose of night.

From this general air of drowsy tranquil-

lity we must specially except that portion of the village which was in the immediate vicinity of the Green Man public-house and the bridge. Here there was an unusual assemblage of people, all animated by a rare curiosity and excitement, for on this spot a bonfire had been prepared to celebrate the arrival of the new Squire (as they termed the purchaser of the Manor-House), and here had a majority of the inhabitants been already waiting upwards of two hours, that they might have the first sight of the stranger and his equipage, and testify their respect for a village patron who was reported to be very wealthy, and who could hardly fail to benefit them by the large expenditure which his residence would occasion. Their impatience and eager anticipation had already led to one awkward mistake, for Jem Harris, an urchin stationed in the elm-tree that fronted the public-house, with orders to wave a flag as a signal to the bell-ringers at the church, mistook the dust of John Chubbs's market cart for that of the Squire's carriage, and by a hasty flourish of his flag occasioned a pre-

mature peal to be struck up,—an error of judgment for which he was rewarded with shouts of ironical laughter and a few indignant peltings from his fellow-playmates, intermixed with sarcastic inquiries of—“Who took old Chubbs’s cart for the Squire’s coach?” an unnecessary question, to which the sulky delinquent scorned to give any reply.

“Well,” said the village butcher, spinning his steel into the air, and expertly catching it as it descended, “he don’t mean to keep sheep I larn for sartain, so I shall have the killing of his mutton,—that’s one comfort.”

“And they do say,” added a half-starved barber, “that he wears a wig, which must be titivated now and then,—that’s another good thing.”

“Sure he won’t think of brewing his own beer?” said the brewer: “the vat up at the old Manor-House be all to pieces, and the mashing-tub too.” But the speaker forgot to add that this piece of mischief was his own covert handiwork.

“The Squire ’ll have good eyes,” wheezed

a fat laundress, "if he do find any washing-tubs fit for use:" a safe averment; for the worthy dame and her husband had purloined and fresh painted the best of them, on the plea that "what was in Chancery was everybody's right, and didn't belong to nobody."

"I warrant the Squire will bring down a smart young valet, and perhaps a couple of grooms," simpered the red-armed, fair-haired daughter of the last speaker.

"Well, minx, and what if he do?" sharply retorted the mother. "D'ye think them fine Lunnuners will have anything to say to the likes of you? Go home to your ironing, hussy!"

"La, mother, how cross you be!" muttered the wench, making a show of obeying the mandate, though she presently returned, and ensconced herself behind a tree, where she could see and not be seen.

"I say, Master Waghorn," hiccoughed fat Sam Belcher, as he finished his pot of porter, "don't ye think the Squire'll stop at the Half-way House, just to take a snack of bread and cheese and inguns, and a glass o' purl? I know I should."

"The Half-way House!" replied the indignant Boniface; "I should like to know what decent body, let alone a Squire and a rich man, would stop at such a low place as that! Like enough he may pull up at the Green Man. *Here* he wouldn't be pisoned at all events."

"I be glad o' the Squire's coming," growled the blacksmith, "acause I shall have the shoeing of his horses; and I dare say they'll want it often enough, if so be that the coachman and I be good friends. 'Taint on that account, for I baint selfish, not a bit on't; but acause his coming will sarve to keep the whole village alive like."

"And I baint no more selfish nor others," coughed the grave-digger; "but as to keeping the whole village alive—od's heart, Master Blow-bellows, sure they live long enough as it is. Devil a grave have I had the digging on for these three months."

"Here he comes! here he comes!" shouted a dozen eager voices at once, as dust was seen to arise at some distance along the road; but their expectations were quickly checked

by the boy in the tree calling out, "Hold your jabber, can't ye? it's old white-faced Dobbin, and the doctor's one-horsed chay."

"He a doctor!" muttered the grave-digger, with a scornful air; "we might as well have never a doctor at all, for he don't ever set the bell a tolling, at least hardly any to speak on. One has no luck now-a-days. There's no fever nor no influenzy a going on these hard times."

Leaving this rural conclave to pursue their speculations in the same disinterested spirit, we must advance a little along the Cheltenham road, and give our readers a short and hasty introduction to the party whose expected arrival had excited so profound a sensation at Woodcote. To adopt the style of the Newgate Calendar,—though we have a very different character to describe,—we will commence by stating that Adam Brown "was born of poor but honest parents in the parish of Woodcote," a fact which accounts for his selecting the Manor-House, deserted as it had long been, for his final place of residence. After passing through the suc-

cessive stages of a druggist's apprentice, a supercargo, and a merchant's clerk, both at London and Smyrna, he settled in the latter city, carried on business for many years on his own account, and accumulated a handsome fortune; when, finding his health affected by the influence of the climate, he gave up his commercial concerns, and returned to the British metropolis, where he intended to reside and enjoy himself during the remainder of his days.

This plan, however, being defeated by a recurrence of the asthma to which he had latterly been subject, he resolved to retire into the country, and pitched upon his birth-place, under the impression that his native air would be most likely to agree with his constitution. An almost uninterrupted success in all his undertakings, and a consciousness that he owed his advancement in life to his own unaided exertions, had inspired him with a confidence in his own judgment which sometimes manifested itself by a perverse and wilful opposition to the judgments of others. His peculiarities, however, we

shall leave to be developed in the progress of our story.

A sheer spirit of opposition, which often involved him in little embarrassments, had supplied him with a coachman whose chief merit was his unfitness for the situation. "All the world says I'm too old, and too deaf, and too stupid to be a coachman any longer," said the man, who wanted to be assisted in establishing a shop. "All the world lies," was the blunt reply; "and as nobody else will engage you, I will." With his man-servant, John Trotman, our merchant had been acquainted when there was much less difference in their respective situations, John having been junior mate in the merchant-ship in which his present master had made several voyages as supercargo. Hence there was a familiarity between them much more in accordance with former than with present relations, and utterly opposed to all the conventional usages that regulate the intercourse between master and man—at least in England. Though John had long quitted the sea-service, he retained

much of its blunt roughness; his curt and captious, and sometimes impertinent manner, being rather assignable to an ignorance of proper respect than to a want of it. From his remarkable taciturnity—for he rarely spoke except in monosyllables—his messmates had bestowed upon him the nickname of Mumchance; but though his tongue might be indolent, his features were active and expressive, while his eyes, ears, and limbs, made amends by their quickness for the dulness that was occasionally imputed to him on account of his unsociable silence.

But the most singular personage of the merchant's household was Mrs. Glossop, the housekeeper; an office to which she had been appointed, with very liberal wages, as a reward for having most carefully nursed him during the severe fit of asthma, followed by an attack of influenza, which had finally determined his departure from London. For many years she had filled a similar situation in the family of his London partner, Mr. Gubbins, whose service she quitted solely because she declined accom-

panying him to Smyrna. Unfortunately, however, she *had* accompanied Mrs. Gubbins and her family to Paris, where they had resided for two or three months, in which interval she had picked up, by ear, a few French phrases, and delighted to interlard them with her discourse, rarely failing to introduce them with a curious infelicity, and generally vaunting her knowledge of the language when she was most unequivocally betraying her gross ignorance of it. As her ordinary English discourse might not seldom have authorized her to claim relationship with the Malaprop family, it may be surmised that her compound dialect was by no means of the purest *lingua franca*. Fat, fair, fonder of tawdry dress than quite became her situation, and, though verging towards fifty, still looking as if she were perfectly well aware that she had once been good-looking, Mrs. Glossop had received a very high character from her late mistress as “a bustling, honest, and respectable body.”

With a housekeeper of such a discreet

age and unblemished reputation, Adam Brown, himself an old bachelor of sixty, might have felt himself justified in defying the breath of scandal, had he troubled his head about it; but thoughts of what the world might think, or say, or surmise as to his habits or proceedings, never entered into his mind. In the consciousness that no imputations could justly rest upon his own character, he sturdily scorned all the conventionalities of English society and manners, continuing to act, dress, talk, and smoke his *chibouque*, with the same perfect independence as when he followed his own whims and fancies at Smyrna. In accordance with this freedom, and perhaps under a vague notion that true gallantry has reference to the sex rather than to the rank of its object, he would not permit Mrs. Glossop to climb up into the dickey of the carriage when they started from London, but insisted on her taking a place inside, spite of her repeated exclamations of "*O mon doo*, Sir, *point de two* ; I couldn't think of such a thing *toutafait*. It's quite entirely *hors de*

combat. Riding inside always gives me a violent *tout autre chose* in the head, and besides, Sir, I know my place better."

"And I know it better still," replied her master, pushing her in not very ceremoniously, and taking a seat beside her, when he amused himself with his companion for some time,—for he had a touch of waggery in his composition,—by drawing out an account of her Parisian adventures, and laughing at her misplaced Gallicisms, though at other times her farrago would move his ire, and draw down an angry order "to leave off her cursed Frenchified gibberish, and speak English like a man."

There was both pride in the humility, and humility in the pride, of Adam Brown, who delighted in referring to his humble origin, and never testified so high an enjoyment of his present wealth as when it afforded a contrast to his former poverty. With this feeling he had ordered a pair of post-horses to be added to the carriage at the last stage, that his triumphal return to Woodcote might the more strikingly remind

himself, and perhaps others, of the miserable plight in which he had originally quitted it.

The rider of the hacks, a little wiry, wizened, bow-kneed figure, who had grown old and grey as a post-boy, had a pride of his own, and would have dashed through the village with an additional speed, had he not been arrested by the stentorian voice of the merchant, shouting out—"Hallo, you Sir! pull up at the Green Man;"—a mandate which was so suddenly obeyed, and with such a scuffling of horses' feet, that the vehicle became suddenly enveloped in a cloud of dust. The youngster in the tree, quite rejoiced to be right at last, had flourished his signal—the church-bells, a poor peal of five, one of which was cracked, were ringing out the crazy gladness of their welcome—the rustics collected at the corner of the Common had vociferously given the preconcerted three cheers, and had crowded round the carriage to have a peep at the Squire, when, on the clearing away of the dust, their stultified and bewildered look

attested their utter inability to determine which *was* the Squire. It couldn't be Mrs. Glossop inside; it couldn't be the dust-covered John Trotman in the rumble behind; it couldn't be the fat coachman, for he wore a livery;—a summary which left no other candidate for the vacant honour than our merchant, whose appearance was in antipodean opposition to all their preconceived notions of the Squirearchy.

A very broad-brimmed hat, meant to protect his eyes from the sun, only partially concealed his old-fashioned wig, which was furnished with cannon curls and a pig-tail. His cinnamon-coloured coat and waistcoat spoke of former days and exploded fashions; his nether garments, of the same hue, terminated at the knee, where they were met by mackerel silk stockings, losing themselves in nankin half-gaiters. Owing to the heat, he had unbuckled his stock, which he held in his left hand, while his right rested on a stout cane, supported by the foot-board.

Not of long continuance was the moon-

struck quandary of the spectators, Adam Brown soon establishing his own identity by calling out, as he leaned back over the carriage—"I say, Mrs. Glossop—I say, John Trotman—here we are at last—this is Woodcote—yonder's the church—above the trees to the left you may see the belfry atop o' the Manor-House—and yonder butcher's shop, but it was a grocer's then, is the cottage in which I was born. It's eight-and-forty—ay, near nine-and-forty years, since I left Woodcote—afoot, with a wallet at my back, and seven shillings and ninepence in my pocket ; and now I come back with four horses to my chariot and a *leetle*—yes, a *leetle* more than seven and ninepence in my pocket. What d'ye think o' that, hey? Ha! ha!"—The latter exclamation, rather an habitual mode of satisfactory self-assertion than a laugh, was usually accompanied by two confirmatory thumps of his cane, which on the present occasion sounded sharply against the foot-board.

Though the rustics could hardly believe their eyes, they could not distrust their ears,

and accordingly raised a new shout of "Long live the Squire!"

"Thank ye, thank ye," nodded the merchant smilingly; "but Squire me no Squires: I'm a British merchant,—at least I was one, and shall be always proud to be called one. Please to remember that, my good friends."

"Good friends, forsooth!" repeated Mrs. Glossop, as she turned up her nose at the smocked rustics and ragged urchins surrounding the carriage: "*ma foi!* this must surely be the *pollyshongs* and the *canal* of the place."

"Tut, woman!" cried her master, who had overheard the latter phrase; "there's no canal here—this is the brook that runs into the Chilt. I've bathed in it scores of times, and treacherous bathing it is when there's rain on the Cotswolds, though it's so quiet and so shallow now.—Hilloa—Green Man!—Landlord!—Master Waghorn."

"Here I am, Squire," replied the party thus lustily invoked, repeatedly bowing

very low, and smoothing down his bald pate.

“What’s the price of your ale?”

“Two shillings a gallon for the best double X from Gloucester.”

“And what’s the size of your casks?”

“Why, we do always keep that ale in eighteens, Squire.”

“And what discount do ye allow if a fellow orders a whole cask, and pays for it next morning?”

“Discount, Squire! I never heard tell o’ such a thing—I can’t bate a farden. I can hardly get salt to my porridge as it is.”

“But you get plenty of porridge to your salt, if I may judge by your paunch, Master Tunbelly. Well; if you can’t afford discount, I can’t afford double X.—What’s your next price?”

“Eighteenpenny—and prime stuff it be.”

“And if you were to roll a cask out of your cellar, and tap it beside the bonfire, d’ye think you could find customers for the whole eighteen gallons—free—gratis—for nothing?”

"Dear heart, Squire, to be sure I could, and twice as much. Ask Sam Belcher if I couldn't. Why if the Sodger do come down from the farm, he could drink three gallons to his own cheek."

"And who may the Sodger be?"

"Why, John Chubbs; we call he the Sodger, 'cause he's an old Waterloo man."

"I'll have no such swilling, no drunkenness, Master Waghorn; but you may bundle out the cask with plenty of mugs, and set fire to the bonfire as soon as you like." A general shout of "Long life to the Squire!" attested the popular sense of this order, while the landlord waddled back to the house, muttering, to himself, "Discount, indeed! what a shabby hound! Well, I couldn't ha' done sich a particular mean thing. Howsever, I'll be up to him, for they shall have the eighteen I tapp'd last Wednesday: there's not above three gallon drawn."

It might have been thought that Adam Brown's first act on entering the village would have been deemed sufficient for the

moment, but such was not the opinion of a little urchin, who, as he took no great interest in the ale, kept bawling most vociferously, "Please to remember the bonfire," until he drew forth the remark of "Well, it *is* a thumping bonfire, I confess. Where did you get all those boughs and sticks from?"

"We picked most on 'em from the Friar's Field," was the reply.

"The deuce you did! Why that's my field, you young rascal; and am I to give you money for destroying my hedges?"

"Please, Sir, there was one large gap already."

"And you have been kind enough to make a second. I won't give you a farthing, young scapegrace!" Whether he repented of this resolution as soon as he had formed it, or that he found it impossible to resist that love of waggery to which we have alluded, we cannot say; but certain it is, that, as his eye fell upon a large puddle, occasioned by the emptying of some washerwoman's tubs, he tossed into it a handful of small silver,

calling out, "Well, well; there's something for the bonfire." Upwards of a dozen urchins were presently scrambling and rolling over each other in the muddy soap-suds, besmirching their clothes and faces in so ludicrous a manner that the author of the mischief shook his shoulders with a wheezing chuckle, which terminated in a cough; while Mrs. Glossop drew up the glass, and turned away her head distastefully, exclaiming, "*Vraiment*, I never saw such a set of *toutafait* petty blackguards! They don't seem to have the smallest notion of *à la bonne heure*; but what can one expect? *Sans doute*, they all come out of the Poor House; and I dare say every one of them boys is a nasty dirty little *sewer de charité*."

"John! you don't seem much pleased with the village," said the merchant to his man: "they are ringing the bells for my arrival—d'ye hear 'em?" An affirmative nod was the reply. "They make a pretty peal, don't they?" John shook his head, and muttered the words, "One of 'em cracked;" at the same time pointing to the

dust, which still settled upon the carriage, and shaking the flap of his coat with a somewhat impatient gesture, as if anxious to move on. "Well, John Trotman, you 're right there," admitted his master, not in the least offended at his rudeness; "so drive on, coachman."

The postilion, who began to feel a thirsty apprehension that he might not be able to return to the green in time for the gratuitous ale, plied his whip, and the carriage drove off to the accompaniment of a still heartier cheer than that which had welcomed its arrival; and in a few minutes our merchant, swelling with a pride and satisfaction which were exhibited in sundry ejaculations of "Ha, ha!" and concurrent thumps of his cane, passed through the stone-seated porch, and planted his foot firmly and triumphantly upon the floor of his own mansion—the Manor-House.

CHAPTER II.

DOTTED around the green or common of Woodcote were several garden-enclosed houses, which presented an appearance of comparative gentility, when contrasted with the neighbouring shops and sheds. To the smallest and prettiest of these detached cottages we are about to introduce the reader, first drawing attention to the decorous manners and appropriate dress of the truly "neat-handed Phillis" who will hasten to open the door before the bell has ceased to tinkle, a quickness of admission never to be expected in large and many-lackeyed mansions.

Everything in the interior bespoke an almost fastidious neatness, with occasional evidences of elegance, checked in its display by manifestations of an ever-present and

rigorous economy, as if the accomplishments and tastes of the occupants maintained a constant struggle with narrowed circumstances. Pieces of worsted-work, equally exquisite in design and execution, were mounted in plain deal screens, coarsely manufactured and unskilfully painted, and against the wall, in glassless frames of a similar description, hung water-colour drawings of finished beauty. An old-fashioned but highly-polished harpsichord usurped an undue proportion of the small sitting-room, while the music-books, all of which were in manuscript, attested the singularly neat penmanship of their owner, as well as a vigilant avoidance of all unnecessary expense. The house throughout was in keeping with the room thus partly described, and even in the garden a penetrative eye might detect a similar character, nearly the whole space being occupied by neatly-kept herbs and vegetables, partially concealed by ornamental shrubs and tastefully disposed flower-beds.

The inmates seemed to be in perfect ac-

cordance with the cottage—Mrs. Latimer, its owner, always wearing the appearance of a lady, though she made her own garments from the very cheapest materials; while her twin *boys*, as she still called them, in spite of their having now grown up to be young men, by their personal comeliness graceful carriage, and courteous manners, presented an unconscious air of refinement, which might seem little warranted by the homely texture and unassuming fashion of their clothes.

“My dear boys,” said Mrs. Latimer, as she sat by the open window of the little parlour, while her eye rested on the shattered belfry that rose above the trees of the Manor-House, “my dear boys, two days have now elapsed since Mr. Brown’s arrival. I would not intrude sooner, because I thought he would be in all the bustle of putting things to rights, and Heaven knows he will have plenty to do in that way; but don’t you think that we ought to call and pay our respects to him this morning? He was a friend, you know, to your poor father.”

“ You mean that my father was a friend to him,” said Allan, the eldest of the twins, “ by recommending him as a clerk to the Smyrna house in which he became subsequently a junior partner, and finally its principal. In short, he owes his fortune to my father; methinks, therefore, it is his business to call upon us. He treated you with gross rudeness when he visited us some years ago, and until he apologizes for this want of common courtesy I for one have no wish to call upon him at all. As we don’t want his riches, why should we submit to his insults ?”

“ Nay,” replied Walter, the brother of the last speaker, whose soft voice and beaming looks attested the affectionate gentleness of his nature; “ nay, his reproaches were not meant for insults. They did but express the disappointment of a kind-hearted but coarse-mannered man, because we declined his proffered benefits.”

“ Which were of a nature and extent,” added the mother, “ that showed his deep sense of your father’s former kindness to

him. Do not forget, my dear Allan, that he offered to place you in his counting-house at Smyrna, with a prospect of ultimately becoming his partner, and that he tendered to your brother's acceptance an Indian cadetship, of which he had taken no small trouble to procure the nomination. Regardless, perhaps culpably regardless, of your own interests, and of his angry and petulant expostulations, you refused his generous offers because you would not leave your poor invalid mother to end her days in solitude. Heaven grant that you may never live to repent it! and sure I am that I can never live long enough to show my gratitude for your kindness and attachment. I can only give you my blessing, dear boys, in return for the great sacrifice you have made."

She held out a hand to each of her sons, and a tear glistened in her eye as she felt the tender pressure of their returning embrace.

"Ours would have been the sacrifice," said Walter, "if Allan and I had been separated from each other, and had left you

all alone. Under such circumstances I should never have known a moment's happiness, whatever might have been my successes ; but I am always happy while we are living thus cosily together at Woodcote."

"So am I," cried Allan ; "and let me add that we are more independent, poor as we are, than if we were indebted to others for their unwelcome favours, or were enslaving ourselves to a pursuit or a profession."

"But though we may not accept favours," observed the mother, "we ought not to forget the kindness that prompts the offer of them ; and so I do hope, my dear Allan, that you will accompany your brother and myself to the Manor-House this morning."

"Well, mother, I will do whatever you wish. If *you* can forgive his rudeness, I have no right——"

"Nay, nay, Allan, there can be no rudeness, I repeat, where there is no intention to offend. Mr. Brown's manners were harsh, certainly, but his offers were most generous ; and you would not surely quarrel

with a proffered melon because its exterior was rough,—at least I'm sure *I* wouldn't."

"You, dear mother? why, you never quarrelled with anything in your life. I don't think you know how."

"And I am too old to learn," smiled the mother; "so let it be settled that we all pay our visit at one o'clock this morning:" a proposition to which her auditors assented by another affectionate squeeze of the hand.

The family of the Latimers formed indeed a little household of love and happiness, where no voice of discord was ever heard, no unexpressed feeling of dislike or discontent was ever cherished. Left a widow at an early age, and reduced, by the circumstances in which her husband died, from an easy competence to an exceedingly narrow though fixed income, she purchased a cottage at Woodcote, seeking no other solace and society than the companionship of her twin boys, to whom she was devotedly attached. Partly from motives of economy, partly because she could not bear to be separated from the objects of her love,

she educated them at home herself, instructing them in music and drawing, in which arts she was a proficient, and procuring occasional masters from Cheltenham for the more solid branches of tuition.

As might be expected from this system of domestic teaching, from their secluded mode of life, and the great restriction of their pecuniary means, they had grown up in an entire dependence upon each other and upon their home enjoyments, in much ignorance of the world, except such knowledge as could be obtained from books; and with a simplicity and purity of character which the young rakes who have been initiated in the premature vices of our public schools would term a pitiful effeminacy. For country sports the brothers had no predilection, and, even had they been addicted to such pursuits, they could not have incurred their expense, the whole of their spare means being devoted to the maintenance of a humble one-horse carriage for their mother, whose debility prevented her from walking, and who derived both health and amusement

from the little excursions in which she was thus enabled to indulge.

Allan, who was a proficient in drawing, and who played on the violoncello like a master, had not only a passionate taste, but a positive genius, for the arts, while he possessed literary talents of no mean order, although few opportunities for their development had hitherto occurred. Walter had sufficient taste for such accomplishments to render them a constant source of amusement; but his ardour was less intense, his success decidedly inferior,—a fact which no one was so ready to acknowledge as himself. Incongruous as it may sound, he had moreover a turn for mechanics, and was the amateur carpenter of the family, his good will rather than his good workmanship being evidenced by the unprofessional-looking frames of which mention has been made. Neither of the brothers disdained the humble occupations to which their straitened finances occasionally consigned them, both acting as gardeners, and both looking after the horse and carriage, with half a day's assistance,

now and then, of a stable-boy from the Green Man.

In so ostentatious a country as England, where appearances are deemed all-important, and horses and carriages are kept quite as much for purposes of display as of utility, Mrs. Latimer's equipage would be stigmatized by a fashionable spectator as a most sorry and disreputable affair, a miserable attempt, in which any person making the smallest pretensions would blush to be seen. The little chariot had once done duty as a fly at Cheltenham; the low-sized and low-priced horse, although in good condition, seemed to have derived very little benefit from his grooming; and the harness had been rubbed until the plating had disappeared. Yet this forlorn "turn-out," which was in almost daily requisition, had been a constant source of health and gratification to the widow and her sons. Ignorant of the real motive with which it was kept, the villagers sneeringly proclaimed, as it passed, that there was nothing they despised so

much as a union of pride and poverty, ridiculing it accordingly as an inconsistent attempt; and although the Latimer family gave away in charity quite as much as their humble means would allow, it was often observed that, if they were only to lay down their paltry attempt at an equipage, they would be enabled to do much more for their poorer neighbours.

Nor did the rich always allow this four-wheeled delinquent to pass with impunity. Whenever, in their drives towards Cheltenham, its owners encountered the visitants of that city in their luxurious well-appointed britchskas, it provoked a contemptuous or compassionate smile, an expression much more offensively marked in the aristocracy of wealth than in the real nobility of the land, who, if they shared the feeling at all, were generally polite enough to restrain its exhibition; but in all instances these disdainful notices were met by a look of beaming good humour, as if the trio had rejoined, "We are quite aware that ours is a sorry

equipage, but we cannot afford a better ; it answers our purpose, and we are very thankful to have it."

This all-condemned fly—for the family never gave it any more exalted appellation—having been got ready by the joint assistance of the brothers, was driven to the door by Allan, its usual charioteer, when Walter handed in his mother, took his seat by her side, pulled up the step by a little mechanical contrivance of his own, shut the door, and the party drove off to the Manor-House. Short as was the distance, the anxious Mrs. Latimer twice let down the front glass to caution her eldest son against giving any unnecessary offence to Mr. Brown, observing to Walter, in a low voice, "Allan is apt to be hasty and impetuous, and, though his temper is the finest in the world, except, perhaps, yours, my dear boy, he is extremely sensitive, particularly where he thinks any slight has been offered to those whom he loves. He has a high sense of independence, and I would have him preserve it, as he well may, for, thank God ! we

already possess everything we could wish in the world ; but I cannot bear bickerings, or even coldness and estrangement ; and as Mr. Brown is to be our permanent neighbour, I should wish him to be our friend. I need not caution *you*, dear Walter, for, though you have as much proper pride as your brother, you are too gentle and kind-hearted either to give or to take offence without good cause."

" And so is Allan," was the prompt reply. " Hasty he may be when his feelings are hurt, but where will you find a milder disposition or a more affectionate fellow ? When did you ever know him——?"

" Nay, nay," interposed the mother, " I am not finding fault with him,—indeed, he never gave me occasion, nor you either ; bless you both ! and it is a delight to see you as fond of each other as you are of me ; and I often think that I am not sufficiently grateful, either to you or to Heaven, for being such a happy mother." Walter maintained that nobody else would think so, and in this endearing strain, which was indeed

the general character of their conversation, they arrived at the Manor-House.

As the little horse was much more rough than ready, and, so far from volunteering a start, never began one without much verbal coaxing, the driver being chary of the whip, Allan got down from the box, and rang the gate-bell, a summons which seemed to awaken nothing but its own echoes. After a pretty long interval, which the gentle Walter and his mother expressed a vain wish to prolong, Allan repeated the application with a vigour that attested some degree of impatience, but which was attended with no better success; and he was on the point of sounding a third alarum, when John Trotman, whose shirt-sleeves and heated appearance showed that his delay did not arise from idleness, walked deliberately up, pointing to the latch as he approached, and pronouncing, in a quiet respectful voice, the word "Open;" as much as to say, "Why don't you drive in? the gates are only on the latch." They were now swung back, creaking shrilly on their rusty hinges; the

carriage was driven through a most disordered lawn, littered with lumber of all sorts, to the porch, where they again had to await the arrival of John, who ushered them into a large but low gloomy parlour, in a state scarcely less disordered than that of the lawn. "Send master if find him," said John, who never threw away a single word that could possibly be spared. To judge by the time that elapsed before he presented himself, the difficulty of finding the master of the mansion must have been much greater than could have been anticipated; but he at length bustled into the room, struggling to get into his coat, and, without making any apology for the long delay, hurried up to the lady, exclaiming, as he long and cordially shook both her hands, "Ah! my good friend, Mrs. Latimer, right glad to see you. Well, now, this is kind and hearty of you to come so soon; but I should have beaten up *your* quarters to-day if you hadn't called, for I hope we shall be kind and loving neighbours. Let us have a peep at your nice, quiet, lady-like face," he continued, leading

her towards the window. "Eh! what! well, it can't be helped, but old daddy Time hasn't forgotten you, I see. It's rude to say so, I suppose, but I never tell lies. And are these your boys? Ods bobs! what fine, handsome young fellows they have become! I oughtn't to say so to their faces, I suppose, but why shouldn't I say what I think? I hate a silent lie as much as a spoken one."

With these words he gave each a hearty shake of the hand, and then added, "Well, lads! I hope we shall be good friends, and that you will often come to the Manor-House; but I do trust you are not such milk-sops and molly-coddles as you used to be, though that's your mother's fault, for she always tied you both to her apron-string. Why, when you were youngsters, as I've heard tell, she wouldn't let you climb trees for birds' nests, lest you should tumble down and crack your crown."

"We have every reason to be grateful to our mother for the manner in which she has brought us up," cried Allan, rather proudly.

"It was not so much my fear of their falling," said Mrs. Latimer, "as my objection to their acquiring when young a habit of cruelty which might have grown up with them. How could you expect a fond mother like myself to encourage them in robbing other mothers of their young?"

"Well, well, there's no disputing about tastes, but for my part they always seemed to me to look like a couple of great girls, when I saw Walter strumming at the harpsichord and Allan scraping away at the tall big fiddle—I forget what you call it; but there's no accounting for tastes, as I said before, and least of all for yours when you wouldn't let them accept the offers I made to provide for them both on my last visit to England."

"Indeed, sir, it was entirely their own choice, not mine," observed the mother.

"And one which I have never for a single moment repented," said Allan.

"Nor I either," added the brother.

"And that, boys, is the strangest taste of all," replied the merchant. "They may

well say wonders will never cease. Why, look ye, Allan. If you had gone back with me to Smyrna, I should have stipulated that you should be taken in as a younger partner when I retired from business. If you, Walter, had gone to India, I should have got you recommendations that could not fail to push you forward. And thus in fifteen or twenty years you might both have returned as rich as I am, or richer, though I have *rather* more than seven and ninepence in my pocket."

"And what should we have done then?" inquired Allan.

"Done! why, you might have settled down quietly at Woodcote with your good mother, and have enjoyed yourselves, and been all as happy together as the day's long."

"That's exactly what we are now, and without any of the trouble of going abroad," rejoined Allan: a reply at which the merchant appeared to be a little surprised and staggered, for he did not like to hear any one question the advantages of wealth.

"And who knows that we *should* have

found our dear mother at our return?" demanded Walter.

"Ay, and who knows," cried the mother with a slight shudder, "whether one or both of my darling boys might not have fallen a sacrifice to the climate, and have *never* returned?"

"Well, and if they hadn't, I warrant they would have died worth money. Don't you call *that* something? Ha! ha!" Two sharp raps of his cane attested his own conviction that such an Euthanasia would be rather enviable than otherwise.

"Be assured, sir," pursued the widow, "that we are none of us the less sensible of your intended kindness. Let us hope that everything is for the best. We are all quite satisfied with our present fortunes and prospects, nay, most grateful for them. We are all, I am sure, most happy to have you as a neighbour, and I am now doubly glad that we were in some degree enabled to protect the Manor-House from pilferage and mischief."

"You! why, you didn't know I was going to buy it?"

“No, indeed ; but for some years past it has been shut up and left to take care of itself ; and when it was understood to be in Chancery, some broke the windows, and some damaged the fences, while others broke into the out-buildings and began to carry off whatever was portable. Now, a house without an owner or protector, instead of being a public prey, as our rustic neighbours seemed to think, appeared to us rather like an orphan child, which has a kind of claim to everybody’s good offices ; so my son Walter, who is a bit of a carpenter, set to work and repaired things as well as he could ; and Allan stuck up a threatening notice against depredators, and seized one or two of the trespassers, though he let them off on their promise of discontinuing their petty pilferings ; and I went round among the neighbours, and persuaded some, and frightened others ; so that we managed to keep the place a little to rights, though I fear it has been damaged and plundered in spite of all our exertions.”

“And a neighbourly act it was, and an honest act ; and I feel much obliged to you all, my good friends.”

“You have no cause, for we never dreamt of your purchasing the Manor-House estate.”

“True, true ; and after all it makes no difference to me, for I shouldn’t have given so much for it if the place had been in better order. Trotman, and coachman, and Mrs. Glossop, and half a dozen others, have been running to me all day, crying out, this roof leaks, and that door is off its hinges, and those windows are broken, and these floors are rotten ; but what then ? I told the London lawyer, who had the sale of the property, and who was too gouty to come down and look into its real state, that *all* the roofs leaked, *all* the doors were off their hinges, *all* the windows broken, and *all* the floors rotten ; and I so bamboozled old Swell-foot, that I got the place at my own price. I tell you what, Mrs. Latimer ; I don’t lay claim to much learning, for I have had very little education, but he that would beat me

in a bargain must come from the far north, and rise uncommon early in the morning. Ha ! ha !”

“You will have plenty to do before you are comfortably settled,” said the widow, declining to notice, since she could not quite approve, his crafty cleverness.

“So much the better, so much the better ; I have nothing *else* to do. I wouldn’t have bought this old ramshackle place if it had not supplied me with plenty of occupation, for I hate idleness.”

Allan and his brother, both of whom had been conciliated by the kindness and cordiality of the merchant’s reception in spite of his bluff manners, tendered their good offices and assistance whenever they could be rendered available towards putting the house and grounds in better plight ; an offer which was instantly accepted with a hearty shaking of the hand, and the visitants had risen to take their departure, when their new neighbour suddenly exclaimed, “Ad-zooks ! I had nearly forgotten to tell you, my good Mrs. Latimer, that I have taken the

liberty of ordering a new cabinet piano to be sent to your cottage, because I observed that your old-fashioned harpsichord, squaring its elbows at you the moment a fellow opened the door, hardly left room in your little parlour to swing a cat in. Though I myself don't know a piano from a hurdygurdy, I made them try several before me; I pitched upon the loudest, which I suppose must be the best; and I desired them to send down lots of the new opera music, all Italian, because I know you and your boys prefer it, though I must say I think it would be much more sensible and manly to sing English. And I have moreover bought—nay, nay, you sha'n't say a word till you have heard me out—I have bought for you and my young friends here a famous brown cob for your little carriage, as your present Rozinante is evidently on his last legs, and the cob, who will do either to ride or drive, will enable you to make longer excursions, and pull you better up the hills, so that you may see a little more of the country.—Now, don't open your mouth, Allan, nor you either,

Mr. Walter, for I haven't done yet. These are not gifts to you nor to your mother; in fact, they are not gifts at all, but a first dividend, and a very small one too, in repayment of the debt of gratitude that I owe to your father, as good a fellow as ever lived. Ah! if he had taken my advice, he would never have embarked in that fatal speculation which went all wrong, and cut up his health and broke his back."

"Alas! it broke his heart," sighed the widow, turning aside her head to conceal an unbidden tear, and taking refuge in a cough, as her broken voice would not allow her to express her gratitude. Allan and Walter, perceiving her emotion, would fain have conveyed their own sense of the merchant's kindness, but he stopped their mouth by abruptly exclaiming, "Stuff and nonsense! don't make any fuss because I want to get out of debt. Give me time, and I'll pay you all. Do you expect Adam Brown to forget the old friend who first gave him a start in the world? If you do, you'll find yourselves deucedly mistaken, and so I tell

you. I am not that sort of chap. Ha ! ha !” With these words he started up, and accompanied his visitants to the porch, apprising them that they must find their own way out, as John Trotman was much too busy to attend them, adding that for his own part he hated to have lackeys always running after him, as if he couldn’t open a door for himself.

Unassuming and humble-spirited as she was, the widow did not scruple to assert, or rather to insinuate her sagacity when she found her judgment confirmed or her predictions verified. On their way home, therefore, and during the remainder of the day, she took frequent occasion to remind her sons that she had always maintained Mr. Brown to be a most generous and kind-hearted man, however unpolished ; that she had stoutly vindicated him from any intention of giving offence on a former occasion ; that she was the first to counsel the present visit, which had already procured for them a new piano and a new horse, both of which were grievously wanted, and which might

eventually lead to much more important benefits. Allan, whose quick feelings sometimes drove him into extremes, and who felt that he had been somewhat unjust in his estimate of their new neighbour, was now vehement in his praise, adding, after a reverie of two or three minutes' duration, "I think I have heard you say, dear mother, that Mr. Brown was never married, and that he has no nearer relation than a good-for-nothing nephew."

"To whom, boys, I caution you never to make reference, for he is a man of such bad character that his uncle has been obliged to repudiate and disown him, and I did hear that the young man, being unable to show his face in this country, had run away to America, or somewhere beyond seas."

"But Mr. Brown," resumed Allan inquiringly, "must leave his money to some one, and who can have a better claim than the family of the friend to whom, by his own confession, he was mainly indebted for the acquisition of his fortune?"

“For my part,” observed Walter, “I should look with dread upon any change: it could hardly be for the better, when we are all so happy in our present plight. If mother wished it indeed,—”

“Not I, my dear, unless upon your account and your brother’s.”

“Is it worth while,” asked Allan, with a smile, “to discuss the question any longer, considering that it is a contingency which may never arise?”

“Well, well, Walter; if we are not likely to have castles upon the earth, we have the better excuse for building them in the air.”

“In the mean time,” was the reply, “here we are at our dear little cottage, which is a thousand times better than any castle, either on earth or in the air.”

CHAPTER III.

NEARLY opposite to Mrs. Latimer's, across the green, stood a larger cottage, of more external pretension, but of much less real neatness and comfort. The door and window-sills, as well as the lattice-work for trailing plants, were painted of a gaudy colour, while the damaged roof, cracked panes of glass, and neglected aspect of the whole building, indicated great slovenliness or a stern parsimony on the part of its occupants. An awkward and dirty young rustic, dubbed with the title of a page, in virtue of a shabby jacket bespattered with showy buttons, ushered visitants into what was termed the drawing-room, where they could hardly fail to recall the fable of the frog and the ox, everything betraying the attempt of

a little fortune to assume the display and swell itself into the dimensions of a large one.

Cheap engravings in flaring frames hung against the walls to conceal the torn paper ; the once tawdry furniture had become forlorn and decayed ; the worn-out carpet hardly presented the ghost of its original pattern ; the rickety chairs had lost the gilding, while the faded curtains retained the dust, of former days : but, on the other hand, a large coat of arms emblazoned upon vellum, and suspended over the chimney, preserved the freshness of its glaring colours ; and a plated waiter, engraved with the same armorial bearings, and placed upright upon a narrow side-table, still retained a portion of its pristine polish. A harp, wrapped in an old green baize cover to hide its disfurnished state, stood in one corner of the room ; a guitar reclined in a second ; a fowling-piece, shot-belt, and powder-flask sometimes occupied the third ; and the fourth was not unfrequently usurped by a lean pointer, gnawing a bone. Literary tastes, such as

they were, claimed fellowship with the incongruous articles we have been describing, the table in the centre of the apartment being usually supplied with an old number of the Sporting Magazine, and a well-thumbed novel, or book of fashion, from the Circulating Library.

This inconsistent union of poverty and pretension was in the occupation of Captain Charles Sullivan Molloy, a gentleman of no small consequence in Ireland, if we might implicitly believe a large engraving suspended in the most conspicuous part of the drawing-room, presenting a view of a stately mansion in the midst of a deer-stocked park, and bearing the following inscription : "Clognakilty House, County Down, Ireland, the seat of C. S. Molloy, Esq." But this was one of those cases in which it is perilous to believe even ocular evidence, the mansion in question being the property of a very distant connection, the initials of whose Christian names had been carefully scratched out to make room for those of the pretended proprietor, who had purchased the print

for the express purpose of imposing upon his English friends and neighbours. This pitiful forgery being sufficient to afford a general insight into the boastful and unscrupulous character of the Captain, we shall for the present content ourselves with adding that he was a widower, and that, after having wasted in extravagant living the small fortune brought to him by his wife, he had retired with two daughters and an orphan grandson to Woodcote, having very little more than his half-pay to support his family, and endeavouring to varnish over his reduced and embarrassed circumstances by pomposity, boasting, and pretension. His personal appearance was not altogether inconsistent with his worldly plight, his once handsome features betraying the touches of decay, and the fine head of hair which had been the glory of former days having been succeeded by a bald forehead ; but his figure was still imposing, and he walked and talked with a strut and a swagger that seemed to defy both time and fortune.

Matilda, his eldest daughter, who sometimes confessed in a confidential whisper to particular friends that she would be five-and-twenty next birthday, though she might safely have added six or seven years to the score, was a showy, bold-looking, forward girl, whose free and easy manner was meant to excite admiration as a youthful exuberance; and whose tawdry low-priced finery passed muster with the rustics for a fashionable elegance. While her father's fortune lasted she had been paraded to various places of public resort in the hope of obtaining an advantageous settlement, but her own undisguised advances had rendered the hook so palpable, that she had not succeeded even in obtaining a nibble from a gudgeon. The flutterers and dangles who usually hover around a handsome and accessible girl were afraid of compromising themselves with a manifest husband-hunter, who seemed ready to construe everything into an offer, and whose father was reputed a dead shot. Boastful and unscrupulous, she resembled in many respects the magni-

loquent Captain, whose mendacious averments as to their former grandeur she hesitated not to support; in return for which accommodation he stoutly corroborated her little fiction touching the *anno domini* of her birth.

In figure and features, allowing for a difference of twelve years in their respective ages, Ellen, the second daughter, resembled her sister; yet this did not extend beyond a slight family likeness, so totally dissimilar was the soft and pensive, not to say the dejected, expression of her face; so different were her modest, unobtrusive manners; so wholly opposite her quiet and guarded demeanour. Nor did she less signally vary from her sister in mind than in externals and deportment, being fond of domestic retirement amid books and music; conscientiously averse from falsehood even in trifles; of a spirit naturally humble, and still further depressed by a knowledge of her father's impoverished circumstances, which awakened a constant fear that his pecuniary difficulties might soon reduce

them to a still lower grade. Fate had, indeed, placed her in a position uncongenial to her nature,—a misfortune that might well explain the pensiveness to which we have alluded; yet was it manifest that some feeling of still nearer and more tender concernment contributed to weigh down her heart, and imparted an additional plain-tiveness to her soft meek voice.

Valentine, the grandson, was a spoiled child and a Little Pickle, whose mischievous pranks afforded infinite amusement to the Captain, unless he himself happened to be their object, when his glee was quickly converted into wrath; but, as he might be called a good-tempered man, so far as an ease-loving indifference may deserve the term, his angry moods were generally evanescent. In fact, he was proud of his grandson, on account of his singular beauty, although he had more tricks than a monkey, more malicious freaks than any elf, sprite, or goblin that ever was portrayed. Historians as well as writers of fiction, from the days of Richard the Third to those in which Caliban

received his poetical birth, have been pleased to combine personal with moral ugliness—a conjunction for which there is no authority in real life ; which imputes, moreover, a manifest injustice to Nature, and excites a most cruel and unfounded prejudice against those whom she has sent into the world in a crippled or deformed state,—a sufficient misfortune, one would think, without the addition of human wrong. For our own part, we hold with the Walpolean theory as to Richard's personal appearance, and refuse to take cognizance of Caliban, as being out of the pale of humanity. Valentine, at all events, was remarkably handsome, and scarcely less noted for his precocious strength and agility.

To save the inconvenient expense of schooling, he was ostensibly educated at home ; but this tuition was limited to such uncertain lessons as his aunts chose to give him, and to his grandfather's instruction in the military exercise, in cleaning a fowling-piece, in managing pointers, and similar valuable studies.

“ Girls,” said the Captain to his daughters,

a few days after the merchant's arrival at the Manor-House, "we ought to have called upon our new neighbour before this, and I should certainly have taken you last Wednesday, but that I had sent my blue military coat to be new cuffed and collared, and the blackguard of a tailor wouldn't return it till I had paid him a former bill, which, he said, had been owing upwards of two years. To treat a gentleman and an old customer in this way for a few shillings! By the powers! if it were not for fear of the law, I would horsewhip the rascal all round the green."

"These low fellows," exclaimed Matilda, petulantly, "are always ready to take advantage of their superiors. What a mean wretch the man must be!"

"I have done with him," pursued the Captain; "he is beneath my notice; and I shall punish him more effectually by withdrawing my patronage and support—for I am the only really respectable customer he has got—than if I had kicked him round the Curragh of Kildare."

"Had there been any blue cloth in the house," said Ellen, "I would myself have been your tailor, but we used up the last remnant to mend Valentine's trousers."

"Confound the little jackanapes!" exclaimed the father, "he wears and tears and soils and spoils more clothes than his head's worth, though that he may easily do. Well, 'Tilda, have you got new ribbons in your bonnet instead of those flaunting tumbled rags that you wore last Sunday?"

"La, pa! they were good enough for church and a showery day. New ones, indeed! Where am I to get them, when my purse is empty, as I am sure you *must* know, and the shop won't give me any further credit? But I have done without; Ellen has washed and ironed the old ones, so that I shall be quite smart enough for such an old frump as Mr. Brown."

"Why, you have not seen him?"

"No; but Val has. Determined to have a peep at the old quiz, he climbed up the wall as he was walking round the garden followed by another queer-looking chap,

whom he called John Trotman; so, when they had passed, Val threw a stone, just by way of leaving his card, and hit Brown on the back, who turned sharply round to his follower, crying out, 'What the devil do you mean by that, sirrah?' but John stoutly shook his head, and Brown persisted and got angry, and Val says he thought he should have died with laughing as he saw him grow red in the face, and thump his cane upon the gravel walk; while John employed himself in again treading the gravel smooth, where it had been forced up by the point of the cane, quietly repeating at each pressure of his foot, 'Spoil the walk.'

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Captain, "that boy has an immensity of humour, and takes after me in everything. Most of the Molloyes, indeed, have been celebrated for their drollery, though we don't see much of it in you, Nell, who are, on the contrary, generally a cup too low—at least you have been latterly. Well, girl, have you got your best bib and tucker all ready for calling at the Manor-House?"

"I did not know that you wished me to have anything new," replied Ellen, who felt the necessity of practising a strict economy, lest she should increase her father's debts, which had already exposed them to various mortifications: "but I have contrived to furbish up my old things, and make them as tidy as possible."

"No doubt, Nell, no doubt. You generally manage to look neat and genteel, but you'll never be so stylish and dashing a girl as 'Tilda."

"But why, papa," inquired the latter, "are we to take such pains in our morning toilet, since there are none at whom we are to set our caps except our new neighbour, and his man Friday, or rather his every-day man, John Trotman?"

"Tush, girl! you ought to have learnt long ago that your father is an old fox, and knows what he is about: when do I ever throw away a sprat, unless in the hope of catching a herring? Listen, and I think you will both confess that I can see as far into a millstone as my neighbours. By the powers! Captain

Charles Sullivan Molloy is no ninnyhammer; and when his wits are set a working, it will not be for nothing. Soon as I heard that old Brown had given a piano and a new horse to Mrs. Latimer, or rather to her sons, thinks I to myself, thinks I, the old fellow is reputed to be very rich, and to have no relations in the world but a scamp of a nephew, whom he has disowned, and he confesses, as Mrs. Latimer herself told me, that her husband first put him in the way of getting his money; and so, girls, I put two and two together, and said to myself, Who so likely to have the old fellow's rhino, when he is popped underground, as the Latimer family? Why, 'Tilda, what a flare-up there is in your eyes! and, Nell, how you blush and look down! What! you take the hint, do you? You jump to your own conclusions, or rather to my conclusions, I see. Lookye, girls; I want you to make a favourable impression upon old Brown; the first effect is everything: we'll endeavour to fish out how the land lies; we'll proceed from the Manor-House to Mrs. Latimer's—a most

respectable woman that Mrs. Latimer, and we owe her a call ; and you must set your smart bonnets at the young men to-day, and your caps at them afterwards. Do you catch the idea ?”

“ La, pa, how strangely you run on !” cried Matilda, bridling up, and glancing at a small mirror in a gaudy frame that hung beside her : “ for my part I expect the young fellows to run after me, without my setting my cap at them.”

“ Well, well, Tilda, I shall be glad to see them running or even walking in that direction ; but we must know which of them is best worth having ; for if you go to market with a husband, you’ll find two empty purses are worse than one. Now, harkye again, girls ! I have known the world longer than you : I have seen society of all sorts, and have fallen in with scores of these *parvenu* fellows, these *nouveaux riches*, these retired merchants or tradesmen, like old Brown, and have invariably found that, though the upstart rogues affected to despise birth and pedigree, and all that sort of thing, they were always anxious

to revenge themselves for not being descended from an old family by becoming the founders of a new one ; which, after all, is the same sort of pride, only tacked on to the beginning of the line instead of the end."

" A very pretty abstract proposition, papa, and I dare say a very sound truth and shrewd observation ; but its bearing on the present question I confess myself too dull to discover."

" That's not my fault, but your misfortune, Miss Molloy, so listen and learn.—Depend upon it, if old Brown means to leave his money to the Latimers, he will adopt Allan, the eldest, make him his heir, and insist upon the younger son going out into the world and fighting his own way, as he himself did. Hallo, Nell ! what makes you sigh so ?"

" Was I sighing ?" replied his daughter, blushing deeply, and turning aside her face to conceal her confusion : " I was not aware of it. Shall I run and put on my bonnet ? I shall be ready to accompany you in a few minutes." And so saying, she hurried out of the room without awaiting his reply.

Ellen's habitual tidiness and love of method enabling her to find everything that she wanted without a moment's delay, she soon reappeared, her youth and good taste imparting to her an air of decided elegance, spite of the plain simplicity and cheap materials of her attire. Matilda's toilet was not so soon despatched, her room and her drawers being always in confusion, and her style of dress much more elaborate; while her love of admiration and display made her fastidious, however narrow might be her wardrobe, in selecting the finery for the day. Downstairs she bustled at length, flaunting in a many-coloured gingham gown, beflowered and befurbelowed up to the knees, her turned silk tippet and bright gloves vainly endeavouring to conceal the arts that had renewed their freshness, the gay ribbons of her straw bonnet affecting an air of crisp novelty from their recent ironing. Though the bloom of youth had left her, Matilda contrived, somehow or other, to have a colour in her cheeks when it was especially needed, and, as this was one of those occasions, she

might seem to merit her father's usual eulogy that she was a fine, handsome, dashing girl, —terms which in his estimation conveyed the very highest encomium that a young female could receive. Nor had the Captain been less studious than his eldest daughter to render himself as personable as possible,—a point in which he was seldom negligent, for he had by no means forgotten that he had once been celebrated for his good looks and fine figure. Though the new cuffs and collar of the military blue coat, which had been impounded by the inexorable tailor, did not quite harmonise with the thread-bare texture and faded hue of the body, still the frogs and tassels with which it was decorated, and the consequential air with which it was worn, gave it a sort of importance, supported as it was by a pair of embroidered trousers, which had seen good service, but which were so tightly strapped down to the high-quartered shoes, and so well adjusted to the figure, that their antiquity was scarcely perceptible.

His coat, buttoned high up across his

broad chest, joined his black leather stock, conveniently precluding the necessity of showing any frill ; a false collar arose high on either side of his whiskers, so as partly to conceal their increasing grey hue ; his bald head was hidden by a bell-shaped high-crowned hat, which, though napless and of a very equivocal hue, was carried jauntily on one side ; and, as he strutted along, performing the sword exercise in the air with a rattan, a practice of which he had contracted a habit, our portly well-preserved Captain might have been taken for a man ten or fifteen years younger than he really was. The Somersetshire clown of a servant-boy whom his master called the tiger, while Matilda dubbed him the page, converting his English name of Charles into Carlos, because it sounded more foreign and romantic, was summoned to attend them on their visit to the Manor-House, that he might carry the umbrella, though there was no appearance of rain. Enduing accordingly a soiled jacket which exhibited a profuse eruption of pewter buttons, he placed a discoloured hat upon

his head, looped up all round with tarnished gold cord, grasped a cotton umbrella in his dirty gloveless hand, and thus accoutred prepared to trudge after the party, much more solicitous to lag behind and gather blackberries than to contribute, as was intended, to the pomp and glory of the family procession.

"Where's young Flibbertigibbet?" demanded the Captain, just as they were about to start.

"What, Val?" laughed Matilda. "Oh! he is off to cure the ducks on the common, some of whom he nearly choked yesterday by feeding them with raisins stuffed with cayenne pepper. He declares they have done nothing but quack—quack—quack ever since; so this morning he has gone to administer some pellets of bread filled with salt, which he says must infallibly cure them; and upon the strength of this prescription he means to take out his diploma as the *quack* doctor of Woodcote."

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared the Captain.

“What a wag he is, the young dog! a true Molloy: such an immensity of humour! He seems determined that I shall laugh at his droll pranks all day long.—Ha! ha——” The full cachinnation was cut short by a start of pain, and a sudden exclamation of—“Zounds! what the deuce is this?”—a cry occasioned by his having thrust his fingers, in attempting to pull on his glove, against some prickly furze which had been carefully insinuated into it.—“The little blackguard—the scapegrace—the vagabond!” vociferated the sufferer, shaking his aggrieved fingers, as he looked fiercely behind him.

“Tword’n I, zur, I’ll take my bible woth on’t,” said the page, perfectly crimson in the face from suppressed laughter. “I would’n go vor ta do zich a thing vor all the world: I zee maester Valentine a gathering some vurze on the common, and I dare zay tha trick’s hisn.”

“No doubt, no doubt, nobody else would have dared. By the powers! if I had him here, I would break every bone in his skin.”

"La, pa !" exclaimed Matilda, "how can you wonder at his little frolicsome ways, when he is such a true Molloy?"

"But the good-for-nothing puppy should spare his own flesh and blood," replied the father, applying his bleeding thumb to his mouth. Ellen, meanwhile, who was usually the peacemaker upon these occasions, having cleared the gloves of their thorny contents, not without some slight self-infliction, handed them to their owner, apologising for the culprit by pleading his youth and thoughtlessness,—a mediation not without its effect, though her father winced more than once as he slowly and cautiously ventured his hand into the treacherous trap.

The nearest way to the Manor-House was by a lane diverging from the common, and sunk between high banks, skirted with hedges and thickets, along which they had made some progress, when a few drops of unexpected rain suggested the prudence of hoisting the umbrella, to protect the newly ironed ribbons of the fair pedestrians. "Hallo, Carlos ! Where have you got to,

sirrah?" bawled the Captain,—an inquiry which soon occasioned the "tiny foot-page" to jump from the bushes, and run up to the party, exclaiming, "Here be I, zur," as he wiped his blackberry-stained mouth on the sleeve of his jacket.

"How now, you dirty little dog!" cried the Captain, shaking his rattan; "is this the way you spoil my expensive new liveries? If I catch you at such nasty tricks again I'll lace your jacket for you finely: give me the umbrella. Now, girls, stand close, and I'll open it for you." Suiting the action to the word, he unlooped and expanded it, when a profuse shower of sawdust fell upon the trio, eliciting from Carlos an ungovernable horse-laugh, and from Matilda a vehement exclamation of "That horrid boy! this is another of his practical jokes, and I do hope you will give him a good sound horse-whipping."

"How can you wonder at his little frolicsome ways when he's such a true Molloy?" asked the father, retorting his daughter's words.

"And after all," interceded Ellen, "the sawdust is quite dry, so that it will not hurt us: and we don't know that poor Val put it into the umbrella." A shrill childish laugh from the bordering thicket, followed by the exclamation of "Crikey! what fun!" soon settled the identity of the young offender, and provoked the ire of his grandfather, who ran up the bank in the direction of the sound, ejaculating, as he flourished his rattan, "By the powers! the rogue shall pay for laughing at us thus to our very faces." But as a greyhound would hardly have caught the agile Valentine, who knew every winding of the brake, the Captain soon abandoned the pursuit, and had just reached the bottom of the bank when his foot caught in the tangled roots, and he fell prostrate,—an accident followed by a second shrill laugh, and exclamation of "Crikey! what fun!" that seemed to proceed from the opposite side of the lane.

At this fresh catastrophe another irrepressible horse-laugh burst from Carlos, which became as suddenly converted, as he

caught the infuriated eye of his master, into a look of unutterable and almost superhuman solemnity. In answer to Ellen's eager inquiries, as she ran to help him up, her father declared that he was not in the least hurt, and, having ascertained that his trousers were in the same enviable situation, he carefully knocked off the dirt from his knees, and resumed his march for the Manor-House, which the party reached without any farther mishap.

CHAPTER III.

"MY good Sir," began the Captain, assuming a somewhat patronizing and consequential air, as he bowed himself, not ungracefully, into the parlour, "I should have done myself the honour of calling sooner, for I am well aware that the leading people of the locality should always be the first to welcome a new neighbour, as the rank and file will of course follow the example of their superior officers—you'll excuse my military language, being an old soldier,—but the fact is I have an apology to offer, which——"

"Which I will not trouble you to offer at all," interposed Brown, who hated all flummery and finery, and felt rather nettled at the airs assumed by his visitant. "You might have stayed away longer if you liked."

and you needn't have called now if you didn't like ; for, though I shall be always happy to see the good folks of Woodcote and its vicinity, I rather think I can do without them.—My name, Sir, is Adam Brown, late of the firm of Brown, Gubbins, and Co. ; and the books of the Bank of England will vouch, I believe, for my respectability and independence.” This was not a very polite speech, but the worthy merchant did not pique himself upon his courtesy, and did pique himself upon the money which he had so hardly earned, and which he thought ought to secure him a position in society, wherever he might settle, and whosoever might be his neighbours. “ But you have not introduced me to these young ladies,” he continued in a blander tone—“ your daughters, I presume ?”

“ Yes, Sir, yes,” replied the father, looking at them with a smile of pride ; “ and the finest and most fashionable, as well as the most accomplished girls in this part of the county, though I say it that shouldn't say it.” Matilda endeavoured to look modest at this speech, and, not feeling quite sure that she had succeeded, for that particular expression

was not her *forte*, she determined to appear girlish and simple by giving her father a tap with her fingers and affectedly ejaculating "La, pa! how can you?" Ellen's eyes were fixed on the ground, her usually faint bloom undergoing a deeper suffusion as she listened to the coarse praises of her father.

"I suppose," resumed the latter, "that you have seen most of our immediate neighbours, *old* Penfold the parson, and *old* Dawson the apothecary, and *old* Roger Crab of Monkwell,"—for the Captain was in the habit of applying this term to his contemporaries, and even to his juniors, imagining that it would assist him in passing himself off for a younger man than he really was.

"The former gentlemen have called, but I have not yet seen anything of Mr. Crab."

"No loss, Mr. Brown—no loss if he never comes near you; for a more sneering, snarling, sarcastic, ill-tempered old hunk it would be difficult to find. I don't know which is the sourest—his looks or his temper."

"I verily believe," cried Matilda, "that the two together turned our beer the last time he paid us a visit."

“Ha, ha, ha ! well done, 'Tilda. My eldest daughter, you see, is a wit—always had a jocular turn. By the powers ! it must have been as she says : nothing could have done it but old Crab's verjuice face, for I brew my own beer, and capital stuff it is,—all malt and hops, no water. I hope you'll do me the favour of tasting it one of these days.”

“I wonder you suffer so disagreeable and dangerous a fellow to visit you,” observed the merchant.

“Why, Sir, I am good-tempered to a fault,—always was ; and if the leading person of the place was to turn his back upon old Crab, he might as well turn hermit at once, and become the monk of Monkwell. Ha, ha, ha ! Besides, he is as bilious as a Nabob, his wife is a confirmed invalid, neither of them are likely to live long, their money must go somewhere : and then he has purchased the right of shooting over an extensive manor ; he often invites me to accompany him ; and as he is too sickly to eat all the game he shoots, he is compelled to give it to his acquaintance.”

“Why, then, it would appear that he does possess some good qualities.”

“Not he; not any, at least, that he can help,—an old cynical curmudgeon!”

“Nay, dear papa,” urged Ellen, “you forget that he makes a most affectionate husband to a sick wife, and that he is very kind and generous to the poor, though he does scold them pretty sharply when he thinks they deserve it. Everybody says that his bark is worse than his bite; and besides, he is so absent, that I do think he hardly knows at times what ill-natured things he is saying.”

“Ay, Nell, and that’s the reason why I never notice his impertinence. If I thought he *meant* to be insolent—*By* the powers!——” In delivering his favourite adjuration the Captain was accustomed to accumulate the emphasis on the first word with a vehemence proportioned to the gravity of the occasion; his present stress upon the “*by*” evidently implying that, if there were sufficient ground for the process, he would make no bones of the offender, but swallow him up whole, or cut him up into mincemeat, according to the state of his digestive functions. “Egad,

Nell!" he continued, "both his bark and his bite are bad enough."

"I have heard Ellen maintain," cried Matilda, "that there was sweetness at his heart, even when there was sourness in his mouth. If it is so, I can only say that his barley-sugar drops are very highly acidulated. Ha, ha, ha!"

"D'ye hear that? d'ye hear that?" exclaimed the father. "Didn't I tell you 'Tilda was a wit? As to old Crab, with his venomous jibes and jeers and his malignant——" The conclusion of this speech was arrested by the opening of the door and the appearance of John Trotman, ushering in the very party thus bitterly vituperated. "Ha, my good friend Crab!" cried the unabashed Captain, "I was just singing your praises to Mr. Brown. Allow me to introduce you to him." And he went through the form of presentation with as much pomposity as if he were in his own house and were conferring a favour upon both parties. Brown, after gazing for a minute on the face of his new visitant, a little shrivelled man of

an atrabilarious hue and sufficiently acid expression, turned towards Matilda, exclaiming, with a significant smile, "It is fortunate, Miss Molloy, that I have not yet brewed my beer."

"Oh—ay—true!" cried the Captain, whose self-possession was almost the only one that he retained. "We were talking, Mr. Crab, of my famous table-ale—capital stuff, and yet never gets up into the head."

"That is a recommendation," replied the party addressed, "for I have a great horror of water on the brain."

"Curious old mansion this," pursued the Captain, pretending not to hear the last innuendo; "on a small scale it reminds me in some respects of my own patrimonial seat. Ah, Mr. Crab! you were never at my fine place—Clognakilty House, in the county Down."

"No, Captain; were *you*?" And then, as if talking to himself, the old gentleman ejaculated, as he counted his fingers, "There are estates in Ayrshire, and in the Isle of Skye, and in the Scilly Islands; and there are *Châteaux en Espagne*; and Ariosto tells us that

all lost things are collected together in the moon: but where is there a depôt for the things that are very circumstantially described, but which never existed? It ought to be capacious. Yours is a large estate, I believe?"

"Immense, Sir, immense! I forget the exact number of acres,—Irish acres, you know, are larger than yours,—but it is certainly one of the finest places in Ireland, though I say it that shouldn't say it."

"Nay, there we differ; for if you didn't say it, nobody would. If you assert the fact, I believe it; if I had seen the place with my own eyes, I might perhaps have doubted: but it's all the same, it's all the same. How say the logicians? *De non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio.*"

"And such hunting!" resumed the Captain, addressing himself to Brown: "I must give you an account some day of my celebrated hunter Paddywhack, and my famous racehorse Skyscraper. Faith and troth! I played first fiddle at the meetings in Ireland."

"The Irish, I believe, have their lyres, as

well as their fiddles," muttered Crab, again counting his fingers with a vacant look of absence. "Some say that the lyre of Mercury had three strings, some say four, some say seven. Amphion built up the walls of Thebes by means of a lyre—Quære: Was Amphion an Irishman? The lyre of Orpheus was thrown into the sea—Quære: Did you live near the coast in Ireland?"

"The great steeple-chase that I rode at Clognakilty," resumed Molloy, "is admitted to be the most wonderful thing of the sort ever performed. Skyscraper would climb up a stone wall of twelve feet high like a cat: well, Sir, he took ten of these walls; and after I had rode him at speed for seven hours without drawing bit, he cleared at a leap a river twenty-four feet wide. But the ground was low on the opposite side; the shock deranged my digestive functions; and for upwards of five months—ay, just five months and four days—I could never eat more than an ounce at a time, so that I was known among my friends by the nickname of Ounce Molloy."

"Are you quite sure it was not *Bounce*

Molloy ? ” asked Crab, in a tone and with a look of innocent curiosity. “ Bounce, Jupiter, bounce, are the words of Midas in O’Hara’s burletta of The Golden Pippin. High nonsense, says Addison, is like beer in a bottle, which has in reality no strength or spirit, but frets, and flies, and bounces, and imitates the passions of a much nobler liquor.”

It might have been thought that the Captain would have taken offence at these splenetic and pointed sallies, but he was not a man to quarrel with a neighbour from whom he occasionally borrowed money, besides deriving various other advantages from his propinquity. Crab, moreover, had a sort of charter, as a humorist subject to strange fits of absence, for thinking aloud, and uttering whatever vagaries suggested themselves to his wandering thoughts ; nor was it easy to believe that there was any raillery, badinage, or intentional offence in his effusions, however caustic ; for his countenance never lost the grim seriousness of its expression, if we may except an occasional twinkle of his small sharp eye, and his manner was invariably

respectful. Rude and inopportune as his escapades appeared, they might indeed have been taken for the unconscious babblings of one who imagined that he was talking to himself and by himself, were it not manifest to a keen observer that he never gave them utterance unless when he was provoked by some display of arrogance, folly, or pretension. The blushing Ellen, who had been sitting upon thorns while her father rode his boastful hobby and received these awkward side-thrusts from his persevering assailant, succeeded at last in turning the conversation upon the proposed improvements and restorations of the Manor-House, observing that the various styles of the building might occasion a little embarrassment to the architect. "What care I for architects and styles?" demanded the merchant. "If I am to pay for it, the style shall be my own, and that shall be the convenient and the comfortable style. I hate accommodation bills, but I do like accommodation houses. What stuff and nonsense to import a style of building from Italy, unless you can also import the Italian climate!"

“But the Manor-House,” urged Ellen, “is of a totally opposite order. It is conventual—quite English.”

“But *old* English, Miss Ellen ; and we may as well talk Saxon as build Saxon in these days. To borrow the style of our houses from the middle ages is as foolish as to import one from Italy. We want them to live in, not to look at ; and if the inside pleases my fancy, I don’t care a button how much the outside may offend the fancies of other people. I’ll have my own way, I repeat, for my own money, or I’ll know the reason why.”

“All our dwellings,” said Crab, “are in the same style—the perishable. We give the toil of a life to build up a fortune with which to build up a house, in order that our heirs may kick down the fortune and pull down the house. What says Pope ?—

‘Another age shall see the golden ear
Embrown the slope and nod on the parterre ;
Deep harvests bury all his pride has plann’d,
And laughing Ceres reassume the land.’”

“Not if it’s entailed, Sir ; not if it’s tied up,” exclaimed Brown. “Thank God, Sir,

we live in England, not in France, where the rascally testamentary law will not allow a fellow to dispose of his own property, however hardly earned. This may be termed freedom—it is certainly making free with one's property—but I call it robbery.”

“Faith and troth! and I agree with you. quite entirely,” exclaimed the Captain, who saw himself in a fair way of attaining the great object of his visit. “Nothing like primogeniture and entail. I am myself an eldest son, and so have been all the proprietors of Clognakilty House since the days of the old Earls of Clognakilty, from whom I have the honour of being descended.”

“Very much descended,” muttered Crab. “Oh, Hamlet, what a falling off was there! There are men who are an honour to their titles, and there are men whose titles are their sole honour. What can ennoble——? but I have quoted Pope already.”

“After you have bestowed your time and money in restoring the Manor-House,”

pursued the Captain, "you would not like the notion of its being brought to the hammer for division among your successors."

"What, Sir, after I have toiled from London to Smyrna, and from Smyrna to Constantinople and Alexandria, to make a fortune, do you think I would set it up to be bowled down again like ninepins, by a whole family of spendthrift youngsters? Not I. Into whatever family it may go, I shall leave it to the eldest son, and tie it up as tight as the law can make it."—Molloy looked at his Matilda, whose countenance became lighted up with a sudden animation, while Ellen heaved a half-suppressed sigh, and fixed her eyes upon the ground. "Yes, Sir," continued the merchant, "and I am by no means sure that I shall not paint the house brown, and make him take the name of Brown, and have a brown complexion, and wear brown clothes, and eat brown bread, and drink brown stout, on pain of forfeiting the Brown estate. Ha, ha!" And, not having the cane in his hand, the mer-

chant confirmed this resolution by two sharp stamps of his heel upon the floor, as if he thereunto set his foot and seal.

Some further gasconades of the incorrigible Captain having drawn down upon him a renewal of oblique sarcasms from Crab, Ellen, in order to protect her father, engaged the attention of his assailant by detailing a case of distress,—a subject which never failed to elicit from her auditor an angry diatribe against the improvidence of the poor, and to secure some eventual relief to the sufferers, if, on a strict inquiry, they proved to be real objects of charity. Availing himself of this temporary diversion, the father whispered to Brown, as he pointed towards the delinquent, “I hope you don’t mind his saucy sallies;—I don’t, for he really doesn’t know what he is saying. Flighty, Sir, flighty—we call him Crazy Crab. Even when he means to be splenetic, and caustic, and waspish, we only laugh at his impertinence. You’re not offended with his wanderings, I trust?”

“Certainly not, if *you* are not,” replied

Brown, chuckling till he grew red in the face. "On the contrary, I think his wanderings, as you call them, are very like home-thrusts, or shots in the bull's eye. Depend upon it, he's a good bowler, for he seems to know that, if you would hit the Jack at last, you must seem at first not to be taking aim at it."—At this moment Matilda alluded to some private theatricals about to be performed at Gloucester, when the Captain, utterly unable to lose any opportunity of bragging, exclaimed, "Ah, Sir! nothing like Kilkenny for private theatricals—never was and never will be. Egad, I starred it there famously—took all the first characters. 'Tilda dear, what was that celebrated Spanish character that all the world declared I acted to the very life?"

"Ferdinand Mendez Pinto," ejaculated Crab, breaking off from his colloquy with Ellen, "was a celebrated Spaniard, and a surprising economist—of truth; being ever the first to visit non-existent cities, and to receive the most circumstantial intelligence of things that had never happened. His

travels are extant, and written in choice Castilian."

"We were a jolly party of us," resumed the Captain, not heeding this interruption; "and, faith! we kept it up famously. There was the Marquis of Mayo, Lord Ormonde, Walter Butler, and I: we agreed to dine with one another in turn, that is to say, when I was not engaged to dine with the Duke of —— Psha! I shall forget my own name next. 'Tilda dear! what *is* the name of that Duke I dined with so often at Kilkenny?"

"Duke Humphrey—Duke Humphrey! Eureka! it is found!" exclaimed Crab. "Douce, in his Illustrations of Shakespeare, explains the first phrase; the second was uttered by Archimedes, when, on entering a full bath, he discovered that the quantity of water displaced depended upon the weight and volume of the body immersed in it."

Being gifted with an effrontery not easily dashed by any rebuffs, the Captain, who liked to hear the sound of his own voice,

however deaf he might be to that of Crab, flourished away in the same vapouring vein, until, having said enough, as he thought, to establish the antiquity of his race, his high connections, the grandeur of his Irish estate, and the consequent advantages and honours of being connected with his family, he proceeded to eulogise the Latimers, in order to feel the pulse of the merchant, and to propitiate him towards an alliance between the eldest son of that lady and one of his own daughters, should the former be likely to succeed to the Manor-House estate.

As Matilda saw his manœuvre, and was not in the habit of being restrained in the promotion of her views by any over-scrupulous delicacy, she not only declared that nobody could help being partial to such a good, such a charming young man as Allan Latimer, but endeavoured, by her significant looks and affected confusion, to confirm her father's averment that she had always had a sneaking kindness for him, and that he had detected young Allan more than once casting sheep's eyes at 'Tilda. This broad

inuendo, meant for the special ear of the merchant, was followed up by a fresh encomium on the Latimer family in general, whom the Captain was plastering with praise in his usual coarse style when Crab broke the thread of his eulogy by muttering, in one of his audible musings, "If praise undeserved be censure in disguise, what shall we term merited praise when it comes from the undeserving? The boa constrictor slavers what it means to devour. A moot point—a moot point."

"Hark at poor Crab," cried the Captain: "soliloquising again—knows no more where he is—wits all wool-gathering. Hollo, neighbour!" and he slapped him familiarly on the shoulder; "are you aware that you are the man in the moon?"

"No—but I imagined myself to be in Clognakilty House, which is the same thing," said Crab drily.

"Ha, ha, ha! capital! capital!" roared the Captain, apparently enjoying the joke at his own expense; and then, with a profusion of pompous and patronising declarations as

to his readiness to serve, and introduce, and countenance the proprietor of the Manor-House, he shook him cordially by the hand, gave a friendly nod with an accompanying "Good bye, old boy," to Crab, and, taking the arms of his daughters, strutted smilingly out of the room.

"By the powers!" he exclaimed, as soon as they were clear of the premises, "wasn't I right, girls? When, indeed, was Charles Sullivan Molloy ever known to be mistaken? Didn't I tell you that the mushroom, the upstart, the *parvenu* would be an advocate for primogeniture, and would have all the pride of ancestry to come, if that isn't a bull? And did you mark how cleverly I drew the secret out of his soul, like a cork out of a bottle? And didn't I foresee it all, as to the Latimers? Ah! you may thank Heaven for giving you such a knowing father. I have shown you the game, girls; it is for you to play the cards; and if you play them well, I may live to see one of you mistress of the Manor-House estate. Old Brown's asthmatic—his lease will soon be up."

"La, Pa! how soon you can run up a castle in the air!" exclaimed Matilda. "Let us walk over the fields to the Latimers', and go in at the garden-gate. It will be good sport, for Mrs. Latimer is such an old-fashioned tidy body, that she can't bear to be taken by surprise, and I do like to worry these finical folks, who must have everything in apple-pie order."

"You are not very likely to succeed," said the sister, "if you expect to find her house at sixes and sevens, for neatness and method have become a habit with her, and her sons seem to have inherited the same disposition."

"We'll try, at all events," replied Matilda, who imagined herself to be sportive and jocular when her malicious pleasantries exposed others to vexation and annoyance. On their reaching the gate, the two brothers were seen working in the garden without their coats, Allan being employed in digging, and Walter in repairing a barrow. "Wait a moment," cried the former, kissing his hand to the visitants as soon as he had re-

cognised them, "and I will run for the key; the gate is locked."

"Pooh! pooh! never mind the key," said Matilda: "lend me your hand, and I will climb over in a minute."

As she had already begun to scale it, Allan ran to her assistance, when she took his proffered hand with a gentle pressure, contrived to make a very tolerable display of her leg,—whether to exhibit the pink silk half of her stocking or her well-turned ankle it becomes us not to decide,—and, having safely reached the top, leaped to the ground with a girlish giggle.

"Bravo, 'Tilda!" exclaimed the father; "jumped like a greyhound. What a mad-cap you are! But young folks will be young folks."

"I hope *you* won't attempt it, Ellen," said Walter, hurrying towards them: "I will bring the key in a minute."

"I had no intention of the sort," was the blushing reply: "I am not so active as 'Tilda. Papa and I will wait your return."

Her sister, meanwhile, placing her unin-

vited arm in Allan's, walked towards the house, where they were speedily joined by the rest of the party, and welcomed with her usual lady-like cordiality by Mrs. Latimer, whose *ménage* and personal appearance, so far from exhibiting any trait of the confusion which had been anticipated, and even wished, by Matilda, presented that uniform "apple-pie order" which she loved to ridicule as quizzical and old-maidish.

CHAPTER IV.

“JOHN TROTMAN,” said his master to him, on the morning after the visit we have been describing, “I have been climbing up to the belfry atop o’ the house, which is sadly decayed, but we’ll have it all set to rights, and the rails round the platform restored ; it will make a capital place for smoking. Where did you put my long cherry-tree chibouque with the amber bowl and mouth-piece ?”

“Packed—London,” was the laconic answer.

“Famous view, John, from the belfry ; been scouring the country all round with my telescope,—and a capital one it is. Do you remember my being the first to discover the felucca privateer, stealing out from

Civita Vecchia, when you were junior mate of the *Arethusa*? Egad! I began to think my supercargo's commissions were not worth a brass farthing."

"Ran for the Straits of St. Boniface. Wrong!" was the reply.

"But I say I was right."

"And I say you was wrong," persisted the servant.

"Is that the way, sirrah! that you speak to your master?"

John gave an affirmative nod. "Was there ever such a provoking—Now I suppose you mean to insinuate, by that impertinent nod, that I'm an obstinate wrongheaded old fellow?" John gave an equivocal and yet respectful bow, as much as to say, if you think so, I have no wish to differ from you; when the merchant, who had been too long accustomed to his odd ways to be easily offended, continued, "Well, John, I have made another discovery with my telescope—I have seen a fellow digging a grave in the churchyard; and so I'll just walk up and—The last time I was there I was playing marbles

with—never mind—you can't expect me to remember their names: why, it's eight, ay nine and-forty years ago next Shrovetide."

"Don't expect—don't want."

"Put on your hat, John, put on your hat, and we'll go and overhaul the churchyard, and look about us a little, and see whose grave they are digging."

"Why, John Trotman," said the merchant as they were wending their way to the church, "you look more glumpy than ever: what's the matter with you?"

"Hate churchyards."

"What, then, have you buried a dear friend, some time or other?" A nod and the word "wife" were the reply.

"Wife! why, I never knew you were married. What has a sailor to do with any one wife in particular? I thought they always considered themselves wedded to the 'Charming Kitty,' or the 'Lovely Sally,' in which they sailed. Can there be any comfort in a spouse from whom you are always running away?" Another nod, accompanied by a look of grim grief.

“ Ah, John ! I have been a luckier man than you—a bachelor, a jolly bachelor, all my life. Never had to mourn for the death of a wife. No, no ; depend upon it, we single fellows have the best of it. Look at me : go where I like, do what I like ; nobody to worry or to weary me.” John shook his head and pronounced the word “ Glossop.” “ Why, sometimes, I must confess, she does bother me with her foreign lingo, but she’s a good creature nevertheless, though I know you dislike her because she jabbers so much French.”

A nod of ready acquiescence signified John’s assent to this declaration.

Having by this time reached the churchyard, Brown strolled to the spot where the sexton was at work,—a process which seldom fails to arrest the foot and the attention of every chance wanderer,—and stood for two or three minutes silently contemplating the scene. Though bald-headed, toothless, and age-bent, the gravedigger had a merry smirk in his countenance singularly at variance with his mournful occupation, and he coughed and chuckled till he showed his

bare gums, when, in answer to the inquiry whose grave he was digging, he replied, in a cracked voice, and with a vacant gape of astonishment, "What! be you the Squoire fro' th' Manor-House? Heart alive! what a queer-looking fish, to be sure!" And then, wiping the perspiration from his forehead with his shirt-sleeve, he continued—"Ax pardon, Squoire, for staring, but I never seed you afore, you know, for I couldn't wait at the Green Man any longer when you comed in. Whose grave? why, Dame Spurling's the grocer's wife; and there's Master Spurling a taking on for her loss fit to break his heart. Was there ever such a thing heard on? Hugh! Hugh!"

"Ah! that comes of not being a bachelor," said the merchant, looking at Trotman, who stood gazing down into the grave with compressed lips and stern features attesting that his thoughts were with his departed wife.

"And what may be your name, goodman delver?" inquired Brown.

"My name be Bat Ruggles, and I've

lived here or hereabout, man and boy, well nigh—”

“What! you’re not the son of old Dick Ruggles the mole-catcher, of Charlton Abbot’s?”

“Yes, but I be though—how the dickens should you ha’ know’d that?”

“Look at me, Bat, and try whether you can recollect me.” Holding himself as upright as he could, and shading his face with his hand, the old man peered at the interrogator for some time, and then replied, “You’ve got a look of old Hobson the cobbler, but he be dead. No; I never clapped eyes on ye afore, not as I knows on.”

“Do you remember robbing Farmer Stubbs’s orchard when you were a youngster, and the great dog seizing you by the arm?”

“To be sure I do, and there be the scar,” replied the graybeard, pulling the shirt-sleeve up his bronzed arm.

“And who was your companion in that exploit?”

“Why, young Brown; he were a poticary’s boy then, and ran away arterards, ’cause he was horsewhipped for riding the pony arter

the hounds with a basketfull of doctor's bottles, which was all broken."

"There you're out, Bat Ruggles, for the pony ran away with me, and frightened me out of my wits."

"You ! why, heart alive ! you don't mean to say that you be young Brown ? No, no, I arn't to be tooked in o' that way, nether. Why, young Brown were a pretty boy wi' curly locks."

"And you, Bat, were then an active young fellow, famous for leaping over the brook with a pole."

"So I were, so I were ; but I be crooked-backed and stiff-jointed now. He, he ! hugh ! hugh !" Seeming to think his decrepitude and infirmities a particularly good joke, the old man continued chuckling and coughing, and displaying his boneless gums, till the merchant had twice asked him in what part of the churchyard Mrs. Brown was buried.

"What, old Mrs. Brown that once kept the shop, and a'terards lived like a lady in the Brook Cottage, 'acause her son sent her home money from foreign parts ? Ay, ay, I'll soon

show ye where she do lie,—I ought to know, for I ha' dug all the graves since Lady Mayhew's time." So saying, he held his spade upright, and, scraping off from his shoes the kneaded clay which had once, perhaps, constituted the throbbing heart of a rustic lover, or the teeming brain of some village poet or politician, he slowly clambered out of the grave, chuckling again at his own crippled state, and hobbled to the opposite side of the church, where he pointed out a flat gravestone, inscribed with the name of the deceased, and the dates of her birth and death. "There's a trifle for your pains, and you may now go back to your work," said the merchant.

"Hallo, Squire!" was the reply; "you don't keep a very sharp look-out. You've giv' me a sovereign instead of a shilling."

"Keep it, Bat Ruggles, it's no mistake; I gave it you as my old playfellow, and there's another for your honesty."

"God bless you, Squire! and may it be some little time afore ever I have the burying on you! but as to my doing any more

work this blessed day, wi' a couple o' sovereigns in my pocket—Lord love you ! I never heard tell o' such a thing. Dame Spurling must bury herself if she's in any hurry." So saying, he thrust the two pieces of gold into his tight polished leathers, the exterior of which presented on one side a well-mapped tobacco-box, on the other an outline of the penny pieces which usually garnished his pocket ; and, after repeating his thanks, hobbled away, his intermingled chucklings and coughings remaining long audible as he trudged along towards the Green Man.


For some minutes after his departure Brown remained with his eyes fixed on the grave-stone, in a deep reverie, ruminating on the days that were gone, and the innumerable acts of maternal kindness he had experienced from the parent who was mouldering beneath his feet ; while John Trotman continued equally silent and transfixed, his visage assuming a still more rueful expression as his thoughts reverted to his departed wife, and the day of her burial.

" It's a sad thing," at length exclaimed

the merchant, as a tear trickled unconsciously down his cheek ; “ it’s a sad thing, John Trotman, to lose a good mother ; the being who has given you your life, and fed you from her own bosom, and dandled you in her arms, and watched over you when you were asleep. Mine was the kindest-hearted creature in the world, and never in her whole life—never—” His voice became husky, unbidden tears were coursing one another down his cheek, and he blew his nose to conceal the sudden gush of emotion that had unmanned him. John remained silent and immoveable, but not without sympathy, for, as he noticed his master’s distress, a tear or two fell upon his folded hands.

“ It is a great consolation,” resumed Brown, in a softened tone, “ to think that we have done—Ehem !—These cold churchyards make a fellow confoundedly hoarse—that we have done—that we have done our duty by the dear departed.”

“ Great—con—con—consolation,” whimpered the servant, as he wiped first one eye and then the other with the sleeve of his



coat; when the merchant, finding there was no better method of concealing his own emotion than by abusing that of his companion, turned angrily towards him, exclaiming, "What the deuce are you blubbering about, you great stupid oaf?"

"Not blubbering."

"But I say you were, and I won't be contradicted; and it's very wrong; and very wicked, not to be resigned to these dispensations. It's like flying in the face of Providence."

"You flew first."

"And I hate whining and pining fellows about me; and so you had better go back, for there's plenty to do at home; and I can't think, for my part, why you accompanied me."

"Ordered me."

"Did I? then I'm the greatest fool of the two." John gave a respectful bow, and then walked slowly and doggedly back to the Manor-House, pondering so deeply upon his deceased wife, that he passed the gate, and did not discover his mistake till he came

to the end of the encircling wall. His master, in the mean while, having hovered for some time longer around his mother's grave, indulging in tender recollections of the past, wandered amid the tombstones, recalling the history of those whom he had known in his youth, and wondering whence others could have come with whose names he was unfamiliar. His soliloquies during this suggestive ramble,—the sudden awakening of thoughts that had slumbered for nearly half a century in his mind,—his amazement at the parties all dying, when he had left them so young and so healthy,—his still greater astonishment that he, who had run away from Woodcote as an apothecary's boy, should now be settled there as the proprietor of the Manor-House, "with rather more than seven shillings and ninepence in his pocket,"—and the solemn thought that ere many more years elapsed he himself would probably be laid low among the play-mates and acquaintance of his youth,—we shall not attempt to describe further than by stating that these mingled reflections de-

tained him more than an hour in the churchyard, occasioning various long reveries, broken by sudden exclamations of "Ha! ha!" and concurrent plantings of his cane upon the ground or upon the tombstones.

CHAPTER V.

QUITTING the churchyard by a stile, Brown followed a footpath across the fields, still too much immersed in thought to pay any attention to the direction in which he might be wandering, until he found himself standing beside the homestead of an old-fashioned farm-house, with ponderous chimneys of twisted brickwork, and a high sandstone roof, patched over with bright-coloured moss and lichens. Beneath the boughs of one of the noble oaks that overshadowed each corner of the enclosure, a half-clad girl, seated on a three-legged stool, was so busily employed in milking a cow, that she did not notice his approach, until he leaned over the low wall, and inquired the name of the farm. "Four-oak Farm, Sir," replied the

little maiden, starting up, and then curtsying and colouring deeply.

“What, John Chubbs’s farm?”

“Yes, Sir, if you please,” answered the girl, again curtsying.

“Odsbobs! that’s lucky: I meant to have called here; I must have a little talk with master Chubbs.” As the speaker’s countenance indicated that the colloquy was not likely to be of a very pleasant nature, it may be necessary to explain that the unlucky farmer was scheduled in the rent-roll of the Manor-House estate, under which he was a tenant, as a debtor for a year and a half’s unpaid rent. Now, our merchant, with whom punctuality and regularity in money transactions were cardinal virtues, had a proportionate horror of defaulters, and, having learnt, from previous inquiries, that the Four-oak farm was on a good soil, and let at a moderate rent, he was by no means disposed to tolerate any arrears, unless valid and unanswerable reasons should be shown for the indulgence.

With this resolution in his heart, and no

very gracious expression on his face, he crossed the yard, and, seeing neither bell nor knocker, tapped with his cane upon the door, which was presently opened by a middle-aged woman, whose countenance, though sad, was by no means unpleasing, and whose garments, in spite of darns and patches, presented a clean and decent appearance.

With a respectful curtsy she invited him in, and ran to bring a chair, wiping it carefully with her apron, when her visitant seated himself, gazing around him to take a survey of the premises before he stated the purpose for which he came. The floor of the spacious room into which he had been ushered was partly tiled and partly boarded, the whole being covered with a bright-red sand; the ceiling was divided by two ponderous beams, from each of which hung a large wicker bird-cage, a few hams, numerous bundles of onions, and other farm-produce; while the heavy projecting mantel-shelf over the yawning chimney was garnished with well-polished pots, pans, and candlesticks, surmounted by a huge fan of peacock's fea-

thers. Previously to the appearance of their unexpected visitant the farmer's eldest daughter, a pale pensive-looking girl of eighteen or nineteen, had been employed in churning; a second had been busily plucking a goose, and a little boy had been occupied in sorting the feathers; but the whole party now suspended their operations to gaze, with somewhat anxious looks and open mouths, upon the new comer. After having completed his survey of this scene, the merchant at length exclaimed, "My name is Adam Brown."

"Yes, Sir," said the farmer's wife, again curtsying, while her countenance assumed an expression of some alarm.

"And you are Mrs. Chubbs, I presume." A silent reverence signified assent. "Is this the whole of your family?"

"No, Squire; besides these three, I have a little girl, Sally, who be in the yard a milking, and a grown-up son who be with a maltster at Gloucester."

"Maintaining himself, then?"

"Yes, Squire."

‘Where’s your husband?’

‘It’s market-day, and he be gone to Cheltenham.’

‘Yours is a small farm, but the pasturage seems to be good, the soil excellent.’

‘Yes, Squire.’

‘And the rent is moderate?’

‘Ye—yes, Squire,’ hesitated the poor woman, who seemed to anticipate that her admissions would establish a case against herself.

‘Why, then, Madam, how comes it that your rent is a year and a half in arrears? If that’s not a poser, I’ll trouble you for an answer. Ha! ha!’ The stern look of the speaker, and the accompanying raps of his cane, so scared the party thus interrogated, that she stood for some time in a state of such confusion and distress as to be totally incapacitated from making any reply.

‘Mayhap Squire,’ she at length faltered in a timid voice, ‘you may ha’ heard that my good man be an old sodger—a Waterloo-man; if you should be at church next Sunday, you may see him in the third pew from the door, wearing his medal.’

‘I recollect Master Waghorn, of the Green

Man, telling me of an old soldier who could drink two gallons of ale to his own cheek.— Was that your husband ?”

“ You see, Squire, when my poor dear John were a sodgering in foreign parts, sleeping out o’ nights and what not, without any covering to signify, and nothing to keep out the cold air, he were obligated to take a sip of brandy, or whatever of sich-like he could come anigh : and so it growed to be a habit,—I should say a disease ; and he can’t help hisself if he would ; and the money slips through his fingers, or is stolen from him when he be tipsy ; and so we come to be ahindhand in the rent : but he’s honest as the day, is poor John, and works like a slave when he be sober ; and so, Squire, if you’ll only be so good as to gie us a little time——”

“ Tush, woman ! you don’t mean to say that all his substance is turned into beer and grog at the Green Man.—If I thought so, I should tell Master Waghorn a bit of my mind that he might not like to hear.”

“ O dear heart ! no, no, it baint here that the mischief be done, but at Cheltenham. We can look arter him here, and keep him

sober enough, except just now and then on the club-nights."

"What does he do with himself, then, at Cheltenham?"

"Why, you see, Squire, once, and sometimes twice a week, we do load our market-cart wi' pork (we be famous for our pigs), and butter, and poultry, and cheese, and what not, which we have all been working early and late to get ready; and poor John do drive it over to Cheltenham, where he does his marketing as sober as a judge; and then a set of rascalion market-people and others, who knows his weak side, gets about him, and takes him to the Golden Lion or the Chequers, and makes him tipsy, and 'tices him to play cards, and cheats him of every shilling, and then puts him into his cart; and if it wasn't for Wellington, who knows every step of the road quite as well as the postman, and my having had the cart painted white, so that folk may see it, and not run agin it, I don't know how poor dear John would ever find his way safe home."

"And who is Wellington?"

“La, Sir! I thought everybody knowed Wellington: it’s the horse my John rode at Waterloo, and he loves him all the same as if he were one of the family, and so we do all. —He bought him when the regiment were disbanded.”

“All this, my good woman, has nothing whatever to do with the matter in question. I am sorry to find that you have a drunken, idle, good-for-nothing husband.”

“Idle! good-for-nothing!” ejaculated the wife, prudently omitting all notice of the first epithet applied to him: “Oh, Squire! how could you think of saying such a thing? I won’t hear nobody say it without telling them to their face that it be a downright — what’s not true. There baint an industriouser, kinder-hearted creature in the world than John Chubbs—that is to say, when he be sober; and there baint nobody so sorry as hisself when he finds how he have been making ducks and drakes of his money. Why, poor fellow! I’ve seen him cry like a child when he looks at——Fanny dear! little Sal will ha’ done milking by this time;

—hadn't you better carry the pail to the dairy?"

As the eldest daughter walked out of the room, in accordance with this suggestion, Brown observed that she looked ill and unhappy. "Ah, poor girl! and well she may," exclaimed the mother with a sigh: "that's just what I was a coming to. She and young Harry Groombridge, the miller, have kept company together for some time, and they was to ha' been married afore this, but his father won't consent to his marrying the daughter of a drunkard; and so the poor girl is taking on fit to break her heart, and seems quite pining away like: Dr. Dawson do say she ought to take cordials and restoratives, and such-like; but, dear heart! where be we to get them, when everything be a going to rack and ruin?"

"Your daughter seems a very nice girl, Mrs. Chubbs, and, as I dare say she's a very good girl also, I am really sorry——"

"Good!" interposed the mother; "there baint such another nowhere. Such a one to churn and bake and manage a dairy, and

handles her needle like an angel!—If you do want to see something worth seeing, look out next Sunday for Harry's smock-frock that she worked for him, all in true blue, with two hearts and a true-lover's knot on each shoulder, and the letters H. G. on the sleeves. Do look out for it, Squire,—if you please, Sir; and see if you baint right glad that I told you on't."

"I cannot allow your husband to go on thus, while you are all toiling and drudging to no purpose. Tell him to come up to me to-morrow, that I may have a little talk with him. I'll have no more arrears. You yourself must confess that it's better he should pay the rent to me than squander it at the ale-house; and he must and shall do so, or I'll know the reason why. Ha, ha!" So saying, he arose, and quitted the room with the look of a man who had definitely made up his mind, and would not be turned from his purpose; while the poor woman followed him to the gate, imploring him to be lenient to her husband, who had but one fault, and protesting that she would work

her fingers to the bone rather than not pay the whole of the rent, if time were allowed them.

Unwilling to betray the softening effect of these eager intercessions,—for he thought that no indulgence ought to be extended to a confirmed drunkard,—Brown walked rapidly away, only relaxing his compressed lips to ejaculate, “Ah! these are the pleasures of matrimony: vastly agreeable! Well, well; thank Heaven, I have kept clear of that scrape: I never married.” Walk as fast as he could, however, he could not outstrip the pale sorrowful face of Fanny, which haunted him on his homeward path with its expression of mingled sickliness, sadness, and resignation. “That poor girl will sink,” he muttered to himself, “unless she has some comfortable restoratives to support her. The apothecary’s quite right: pills and drugs in these cases are all nonsense—nothing like generous diet. Odd enough, but so it is, that, when these gentlemen of the pestle and mortar have to deal with poor people, they generally prescribe rich cordials, chicken

dinners, choice wines, horse or carriage exercise, and an excursion to Bath, Brighton, or Cheltenham. Well, well ; we must see what we can do for her."

These soliloquies brought him to the Manor-House, where he called lustily and repeatedly for Mrs. Glossop, betaking himself with a hearty good will to the bell when he found that his vocal summons produced no effect. "Why, where the deuce have you been hiding yourself?" he demanded, on her bustling into the room : "I thought you were either dead and buried, or else that you had eloped with John Trotman."

"*Mon doo !* Sir," ejaculated the house-keeper, with a look of disdainful horror ; "how could you think I should ever bemean myself to marry such a *cul de sac* as John? No, indeed ; if ever I settle at all, it must be with a *haut ton*. I was so busy writing a *lettre de cachet* to a *chère amie*, that I never heard the bell, or I should have come sooner."

"Well, well ; better late than never. What

was that famous posset you made for me when I was so confoundedly ill? Capital stuff! gave me a second life."

"It's a receipt of my own: all invented out of my own *amour propre*; and I call it caudle-cup."

"I want you to make a bottle of it,—a quart bottle or more,—and take it down to a poor girl that's very ill at the Four-oak Farm: and harkye, Mrs. Glossop; please to take the best Madeira, and put in plenty of spice and good things, and let her have more if she wants it; and look after her now and then, for I know you to be a famous nurse."

The housekeeper curtsied and retired, with a smirk of satisfaction upon her features, partly occasioned by the compliment to her abilities, and partly from the pleasant anticipation of the sanatory effect to be produced by the cordial which she had been instructed to concoct. Neither of these feelings, however, prevented her reperusal of the following letter, addressed to a friend in London, which she had just completed when she had been so suddenly called away:—

“ *O ma share* Mrs. Jellicoe !

“ Who would ever have thought that, after being born and bred in London, and living so many years with the Gubbinses in Finsbury Square, and travelling to *la bell France*, that mine, after all, should be a *fate shampaytre*, and that I should be doomed to live in the country, and a very ugly country too ? To talk of the beauty of Woodcote is, in the language of the *bo monde*, quite a *foe paw*. We started from London in our own *voiture*, quite like a *Milord Anglay* : and guess my indelible *je ne say quoi* when master would insist that I should ride inside, though I repeatedly exclaimed *point de two*, and *je ne voo paw* ; but he would persist : you know he is as obstinate as a *poste restante*, so I at last gave my consent by exclaiming *toot o contraire*, and jumped in.

“ You will observe, *ma share*, that I have become half a Frenchwoman, quite a *parley voo fransay* ; but I had no master at Paris, picking up everything by ear, so that I can't quite answer for the spelling, which is no

odds, as the French never spell as they write, which I call looking one way and rowing another. Now, in English I peek myself upon my ornithology, and you will admit that my spelling is invariably accoorit. After all, I was glad to escape riding in the rumble along with John, who is by no means one of the *John comme il fo*, as the French say. When we arrived at Cheltenham the town was all alive; for it happend to be the day of the king's dissection, when he first came to the crown; so the soldiers were out, firing ever so many *few de joys*, and we met the kernel of the core prancing down the principal *roo*, as grand as if he were the autograph of all the Russias; and I really felt quite cowed when the alderney who was following him came prancing close up to the *voiture*, a swishing his tail like mad. What with the naying of the horses, and the drums and trumpets, and the church-bells, it was really what the French call a *bo spectacle*. But, *oh, ma share!* what lies the papers do tell, leading us to believe that this here very regiment had been cut to pieces

in the East Indies ! for only last week I myself read a paragraff stating that its headquarters had arrived from Bombay at Gravesend ; and here they were, all alive and kicking, and as merry as grigs.

“ *Grass a Doo !* we arrived all safe at Woodcote : but, oh ! what a ramshackle place is the Manor-House, *triste comme oon bonnet de knee*, as the French say ! They tell me it has been very much admired as a spessy-men of fine old English architecture. Architecture, indeed ! why, the housekeeper’s room has a worse look-out than the parlour, and has only one lock-up closet, and no pickle-cupboard, and no shelves for preserves ! You are a housekeeper yourself, *ma share* Mrs. Jellicoe, and can understand how much I must have been horrified at this *coo de grass*. Then there is an itch in the wall, just at the foot of my bed, which, *sang doute*, once contained an idle, worshipped by those nasty monks. The very sight of it put me in mind of old Scratch ; and as to sleeping, would you believe that they had put a bumpy hard old *matelot* on the bed, and an *oriley* to

match under my head? so that it was hours
afore ever I sunk into Murphy's arms.
Adoo, ma share. I shall soon write again.
En attendong, je voo baize les main upon
both cheeks, and remain,

“*Toojooors a voo,*

“ MARY GLOSSOP.

“ P.S. In reading over my letter I see that
I have written the king's *dissection*, but you
will of course discover that I meant the
king's *procession*. You would excuse the
fo paw if you knew what a bad pen I had
at the *momong*.”

CHAPTER VI.

IN the restless activity of the merchant's mind, and his resolution to see everything with his own eyes, and accomplish as much as possible with his own hands, he was everywhere where he ought not to be, and nowhere where he ought to be, often retarding the proceedings of the different workmen in his over-anxiety to expedite them. As there was a necessary cessation of these multifarious labours on the first Sunday after his arrival, the silence of the whole house, with the solitariness and absence of bustle in the domain as he walked round it before breakfast, enabled him to observe, for the first time, that the grey antiquated mansion, with its weather-beaten aspect, the grim-looking heads carved on the projecting corbels, and the ponderous encircling wall,

topped with ragged weeds, assumed, altogether, a rather forlorn, melancholy, and prison-like appearance. "A fellow should never go out before breakfast," he muttered to himself as he sate down to his substantial morning's meal: "when the stomach's empty the heart's empty, and everything looks half-starved and miserable. Those ugly stone-headed chaps under the roof appeared to be scowling down upon me with famished faces, as if they longed to crawl out of the wall and gobble me up. Hunger, they say, will eat through stone walls: no wonder, then, that it eats into the heart, and makes one dumpy and mopish. No, I won't turn out again till I can face the foul fiend with a good foundation of cocoa and cold meat in my stomach." A very solid basis of this nature having been secured, our merchant arrayed himself in his best cinnamon-coloured suit, and, having ordered the carriage to be got ready at the proper hour, he informed Trotman and Mrs. Glossop that, as the pew appertaining to the Manor-House was of ample dimensions, he should wish

them, and as many of the other servants as could be spared from home, to take their seats beside him. John gave a sailor-like assenting bow, and disappeared ; but the housekeeper received the proposition with a disconcerted look, and an exclamation of, " Dear me, Sir ! *O ciel !* You can't surely be serious ? it wouldn't at all be *apropos de bottes*. Why, I wouldn't do any such a thing for *point d'argent*—no, nor for twice as much. What would all the *comme il fo* of the neighbourhood think of such a particularly simultaneous proceeding ? and what would the *bah purple* say to it ? "

" What, Mrs. Glossop ! an't I independent ? an't I my own master ? Can you show me in the parish of Woodcote, or in the county of Gloucester, or in the whole world if you like, a man, woman, or child, be they high, low, jack, or the game, for whom I care one single brass farthing ? "

" No, Sir, *certainemong*. It's all very well abroad, where you've been so long a living, Sir, that the *canal* and the *comme il fos* should all go together to their Catholic

worship higgledy-piggledy, which I suppose is why they call it a mass; but indeed, and indeed, it's not at all the *alamode* way of going to church in this country."

"So much the worse. I thought we went to church to forswear pomps and vanities, not to wear them: to show that we are all of one faith and one family, and the children of one father—not to display our trumpery ranks and distinctions, and to separate into classes, and to divide the rich from the poor, as if we were not all to go to heaven by the same road and the same conveyance."

"Good gracious, Sir! what a singular *denoumoug*! If you were thus to make an omnibus of a church, I'm quite sure none of the *grand noblesse* would travel by it."

"Then I would leave them behind, that they might book themselves, if they chose, in the devil's diligence. For my part, I would have all the pews pulled down, and made into benches, that we might all sit cheek by jowl, looking at the parson and minding our devotion, instead of ogling one another, or falling asleep in our cushioned

and padded pews, as I have seen so many doing in the fashionable London chapels."

"*Ma foi!* Sir; you certainly have the strangest way of thinking;—but in course, if your orders are *de rigger*, as the French say, I shall make a pint of obeying them, though they're by no means *a la bone hoor*."

"When I give directions, Mrs. Glossop, I expect them to be followed, not discussed. Ha, ha "

The peremptory cane having confirmed this decision, the housekeeper hurried away to array herself in her most showy attire, arguing that, as she was to sit in the same pew with her master, it was only a proper mark of respect to him that she should be dizenied out in her best habiliments. Some drawback it was from the pride of this church collocation that she was to share it with the other domestics: determining, therefore, not to be confounded with them in proceeding to the sacred edifice, she walked to it alone, endeavouring, but in vain, not to look proud of her finery, and enjoying, with an inordinate though suppressed triumph, the gaping

admiration of the rustics as she flaunted through the village. As it was part of our merchant's religion to respect the religion of others, he invariably made his appearance in church some time before the commencement of the service, so that himself and his household formed the gapesight of the congregation as long as the bell continued tolling.

Although the Manor-House pew had been furnished with curtains in Lady Mayhew's time, those appurtenances had subsequently disappeared: there was nothing, therefore, to screen the present occupants from observation, and most liberally was it dispensed; for in this sequestered village, where most of the church-goers were attired in smock-frocks, the apparition of the "new Squire" and his attendants was an occurrence that excited the curiosity of the whole congregation. All eyes converged towards the spot where they sat, not always unaccompanied by a furtive nudging of elbows: a low whisper ran from pew to pew; and more than once, from the quarter where the young females predominated, was heard something

like a half-suppressed titter; all which irreverent sounds instantly ceased on the appearance of the clergyman, who discharged the duties of his sacred office with a zealous and almost paternal solicitude that had secured to him the love and respect of the whole neighbourhood.

After the worthy pastor, the most interesting object in that rural church was the benevolent-looking Mrs. Latimer; her beaming and affectionate eyes gazing alternately upon her twin sons, who carefully supported her along the aisle, as if she were mentally ejaculating, not without a touch of pride in her tenderness, "These are my good and noble boys—the supporters not of my decrepit form alone, but of my heart, my soul, my very existence." All drew up, or stood respectfully aside, to let them pass; for though their rustic neighbours might now and then indulge in a laugh or a sneer at the expense of their humble equipage, the Latimer family were beloved by the whole village. Behind them walked Captain Molloy, evidently impatient at his inability to throw out his leg

with his usual strut and shake of the knee, but making amends by expanding his buttoned-up chest, and elevating his bald head with an additional pomposity. His daughters followed,—Matilda ruffling the plumes of her cheap finery, while she bridled and sidled in the attempt to win the attention of Allan Latimer, whom she had been vainly ogling during the service ;—Ellen, in a dress of modest neatness, slowly pacing with downcast eyes until she ventured to steal a furtive glance at Walter.

In a secluded village even the appearance of a new horse is a momentous occurrence—so much so that a little knot of rustics was collected round the cob, after the conclusion of the service, discussing his various points, and looking into his mouth to ascertain his age, when the Captain came up, exclaiming, as he patted him caressingly on the shoulder, “A capital little nag indeed ! ”Tilda dear ! doesn’t he remind you of the famous black cob I had in Ireland, that was given to me by—was it the Duke, or Lord Ormonde ? No matter, I never used him except as a mere

hack. He must have been half a hand higher than this little fellow. Ah! I shall never see such another." Whatever might have been the effect of this braggadocio strain upon the bystanders, it elicited no reply from the Lati-mers, who bowed politely to himself, more cordially to his daughters, and drove away.

The good-tempered Adam Brown, who had not forgotten the earnest solicitation of Mrs. Chubbs, gazed around, as he left the church, for the smock-frock of Harry Groom-bridge, with its embroidered hearts and true-lovers' knots, and soon discovered its wearer, a good-looking young man, waiting by the door to have a little chat with his sweetheart, ere she mounted the market-cart in which her father usually drove her home, the farm being at some distance from the church. John Chubbs himself, a fine soldierly figure, decently attired in his Sunday gear, and wearing his Waterloo medal, drew up as 'the Squire' left the church, and gave him a military salute with his hand; after which he lost no time in hurrying towards his cart, lest he should be asked why he had never

made his appearance at the Manor-House as requested. His wife had delivered Brown's message to that effect ; but John, who was an old soldier in every sense of the word, and who well knew the purport of the invitation, was by no means anxious to receive a severe rating for his intemperate habits, followed, probably, by an inconvenient demand for the overdue rent.

On the low wooden memorial of a former friend and fellow-labourer, whose grave he had dug, sate Bat Ruggles the sexton, chuckling, and coughing, and grinning, with a vacant satisfaction, whenever, as he peered into the faces of the passers-by, he detected such traces of sickness or superannuation as promised him an early job, and a consequent carouse with his pipe and pot at the Green Man. His own age and infirmities might have suggested that he was not unlikely to be committed to the earth sooner than his anticipated victims ; but if any such thought ever crossed his careless mind, it did not by any means check his cackling and crowing. Looking upon his fellow-creatures as so

much food for the grave, he considered every new grave as so much drink for himself; and as men were sure to die, he saw before him an indefinite succession of tipplings,—a prospect which accounted for his habitual cheerfulness.

On such an eventful Sunday as that which we have been describing, it was hardly to be expected that the churchyard would be speedily evacuated, especially by the red-cloaked and black-bonneted females of the parish. A little knot of these crones and gossips lingered for some time in one corner of the enclosure, commenting with great eagerness on the all-absorbing subject of the new Squire and his household. "Don't tell me," cried one, shaking her head with a condemnatory significance—"if that stuck-up fat creature baint the Squire's wife, it be his mistress; mark my words if she baint. D'ye think he'd a let her sit in the same pew if she warn't? not he!"

"Well, Mrs. Diggins," said a second, "I never speaks ill of no one, 'specially them as I don't know; but I must say it do look un-

common like : and if so be that it be so, why, then it's a burning shame, and I doan't care a pinch o' snuff who hear me say so."

"You han't got a pinch about you, Mrs. Dobbs, have you?" inquired a third, whose nose seemed to have been stimulated by the last expression. A tin box having been produced, with a convenient division for the reception of tobacco, and the whole party having taken a pinch of Scotch rappee, the last speaker continued ;—"I do s'pose Madam's fine shawl were meant for rael Indgy ; but, bless your heart, Mrs. Dobbs ! it's no more Indgy than my scarlet cloak." "And as for her fine silk layloc gownd," croaked a third, "I say, sure as ever I stond here, that it be an old un dyed. What do *you* say, Mrs. Tapps?"

"No doubt on it, none in the varsal world : and I wouldn't mind being upon my Bible oath that the watch stuck in her girdle were only copper.—And what call, I should like t' know, has a creature like that for a parasol and a veil? She han't got much complexion to spile, I can tell her." In this

strain the colloquy proceeded for some time, the assembled conclave being unanimous in reprobating the monstrous innovation of "a creature" like Mrs. Glossop taking her seat in the Squire's pew, whether she were only his housekeeper, or occupying the less respectable station which their suspicions had so unjustly assigned to her.

Remarkable is the sympathy between the great and little vulgar of English society in their intolerance of the smallest deviations from established modes, usages, and observances. In this respect all classes, with only individual exceptions, are stanch conservatives, condemning every deviation from customary forms and etiquette as angrily as if it were a moral offence. At the principal gate of the churchyard had been stationed a gorgeous coach, the conspicuous arms covered with quarterings enclosed in a mantle purposely fashioned to assume the appearance of supporters, the sleek stately horses bedizened with plate-harness, and the servants making quite a "flare-up" among the smock-frocks of the rustics, by the contrast of their flaunt-

ing liveries. This equipage appertained to Sir Gregory Cavendish, the occupant of a large mansion in the neighbourhood, who sought to bury in oblivion his low civic origin by an ostentatious display of his wealth, and an affectation of aristocratic exclusiveness. Gout, whose visits will not be repulsed even by the offensive *hauteur* of a rich upstart, had confined the baronet to his arm-chair at home; but his son and daughter had condescended to occupy a decorated pew in the church, where they were screened from the contaminating gaze of the profane vulgar by crimson curtains, and could humble themselves, as they imagined, before their Creator, by a display of pride and arrogance towards their fellow-creatures.

As they approached their carriage after the conclusion of the service, the dandy son, whose white kid forefinger was passed through the ring of an eye-glass, raised it slowly up in order to take a farewell survey of Brown and his household, drawling out,

as he finished the process, "Pawsitively the most extror'nary ménage, or rather menagerie, I have seen since we visited the Zoological Gardens. I wonder whether that creature with the abawminable cherry ribbons is the female of that male animal with the cinnamon-coloured hide."

"Mrs. Sidney, my maid," replied the sister, "tells me that she is his housekeeper, and the others who sat in the same pew with him were evidently common servants. Did you ever! it really makes one sick. Faugh!" And the fair speaker held her golden *bouquetière* to her nose with a most distasteful expression.

"What a parteecularly nasty fellah!" resumed the brother. "Some radical rascal, I dare say, who would reduce us all to his own rank."

"Well, we should be safe there, Algernon, for he couldn't well reduce us any lower."

"He, he! parteecularly good, Augusta: I must tell that to the Baronet when we get home."

"That red-faced housekeeper, with her antediluvian bonnet, reminded me of Henry the Seventh's Chapel."

"How uncawmonly mysterious! Why so?"

"Because she's a fine specimen of the florid Gothic."

"He, he! capital! Raily you're quite in force this morning. I must tell that to the Baronet. Did you ever see such a carriage and horses, except poor Mrs. Latimer's fly? Look! the male animal is talking to that snarling cur old Crab—'sure such a pair were never seen,' except Gog and Magog in Guildhall. He, he! Pawn my honour! I think we are both rather witty this morning."

"How exceedingly providential, dear Algernon, that we determined not to call on this horrid man! What would the Countess have said had she seen us speaking to him? I shudder to think of it."—With these words the horrified Augusta stepped into the carriage, followed by her brother, both amusing themselves during their drive home by ridi-

culing Adam Brown and his "menagerie," in a spirit quite as vulgar and illiberal, though in rather more polished language, than that which had been manifested by the village crones and gossips in the churchyard.

The object of all this curiosity and comment, who little dreamed of the innuendoes he was occasioning, and who would have been perfectly indifferent to them had he heard every word that was uttered in the course of the morning, remained for some little time chatting with Mr. Crab, who had already won favour in his sight by his pungent rebukes of the pompous and boastful Captain Molloy. As he had intended to call at Monkwell, he offered to take its owner home in his carriage, a proposition which was courteously accepted, and the two seniors, as they were driving towards it, fell into a friendly conversation. "Some of those were woundy wipes, hard hits, home thrusts, that you gave the Captain," said Adam, chuckling at the recollection.

"His audacious and impudent inventions were insults to the whole company, or I

should not have retorted upon him so sharply. The Captain knows that I never suffer his braggadocios to pass unquestioned or unridiculed, yet he will challenge me to attack them,—a defiance that provokes me, though I endeavour to thrust at him obliquely, and not expose him more than I can help; we understand one another perfectly. Pray don't fancy that I am always the sour, caustic, cynical old fellow that you may have thought me from our last interview, or that you may have heard me described by others. Pride, pretension, and folly, when they become obtrusive, do move my spleen beyond my power to control it; but, like other old dogs, I neither snarl, nor bark, nor bite, when people let me alone."

"The Captain, I fear, seldom allows you much respite, for he seems to be an incorrigible swaggerer. And this reminds me to ask you who was the finical jackadandy that stared at me so rudely through his eye-glass, and then lounged with such a lackadaisical air into a sort of Brummagem Lord Mayor's coach?"

“That, Sir, is a man of no small consequence in the opinion of the neighbourhood, of immeasurable importance in his own, being the son and heir of the hidalgo, the magnifico, the high-mightiness of the whole district, Sir Gregory Cavendish of Cavendish Hall, whom not to know argues thyself unknown.”

“I never heard of him nevertheless. Who is he ? who was he ?”

“I have answered the first question already, but I hardly dare give you a reply to the second, for it involves an irremissible offence, and Sir Gregory is both powerful and unforgiving. O, Mr. Brown ! I could a tale unfold whose lightest word would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood—”

“But my blood’s all old.”

“True, true,—that makes a difference. Well, then, as we are all alone—your coachman has not quick ears, has he ?”

“Deaf as a haddock.”

“Good ! and your footman ?”

“Never listens to anything he isn’t meant to hear.”

“Better still. Well, then, Mr. Brown, list, list, Oh list!” Crab here assumed a look of deep solemnity that might have startled his companion had not a twinkle of malicious pleasantry lighted up his little eyes as he continued: “Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in Ashkelon—but the grand, the redoubtable Sir Gregory Cavendish was once Sir Gregory Gible!!” at the mention of which words the speaker recoiled into the corner of the carriage as if he were astounded at his own audacity in making the revelation.

“Gregory Gible? When I was a druggist’s apprentice I knew a fellow of that name—a great dealer in Irish butter in the Minories.”

“That’s the very man.”

“You don’t mean it?”

“Your pardon, Mr. Brown, I do mean it.”

“Odsbobs! I know the chap’s whole history. First a warehouseman, then a clerk, then married his master’s widow, then got the business, then took the great Irish butter contract for the navy, and became at last a wealthy man; bought a borough, always

voted with the ministers,—and there I left him when I last went to Smyrna.”

“Then I must supply you with the remainder of his history, which is soon told. His votes procured him a baronetcy; his wealth enabled him to retire from business; he built a fine mansion in this vicinity; and, setting himself up for an aristocrat and a high-caste exclusive, he is proportionately horrified when any allusion is made to his original trade and station.”

“But whence came his new name?”

“Heaven knows. He chose to change, and doubtless thought that he might as well take a good one, and leave the Giblet as far behind him as he possibly could.”

“I should have thought him less of a goose nevertheless had he stuck to it. Only to think of Gregory Giblet—I beg his pardon, I mean Sir Gregory Cavendish,—being a great man and a neighbour of mine! I suppose he means to cut me, though I am an old friend. Do you think he will condescend to do me the honour of calling at the Manor-House?”

"As he certainly ought to do so, I rather suspect that he will not."

"But I may call upon him; at all events I will. It may afford us some amusement. He! he!"

This colloquy brought them to Monkwell, a small old-fashioned house, where the visitor was introduced to Mrs. Crab, a small, old-fashioned lady, sitting in an easy chair, and reading a small old-fashioned bible with the assistance of spectacles. Everything appertaining to this establishment was rather little and rather antiquated, not even excepting the servants, who were evidently old dependants of the family, and whose welcoming smiles, as their master returned to his quiet sequestered abode, afforded a sufficient proof that he was of a kind and gentle nature at home, however keen and caustic he might be in the houses of others. The wife's affectionate looks, and the husband's tender inquiries as he wheeled her about in her easy chair, ministering to her wants and endeavouring to anticipate her wishes,—no very easy task in the case of a querulous and

somewhat fanciful invalid,—supplied strong confirmations of Crab's inherent kindliness of disposition, although he was almost universally reputed to be an ill-tempered cynic.

His wife, who was by no means free from the besetting sin of invalids, a tendency to dwell upon their own ailments, was rather more diffuse in this indulgence than suited the taste of her visitant, whose annoyance was not diminished when the husband whispered that her health had been originally undermined by mental anxiety and distress, arising from the long illness and subsequent death of an only child. Though of a genial and kind nature, Brown was not a person of refinement or of very delicate sympathy, so that he could not enter into the feelings of Crab, who looked upon these complainings as the natural out-pourings and relief of sickness, a sort of vocal tears, which he even found an interest in watching, since they indicated the nature and direction of his wife's sufferings, and thus enabled him to apply whatever remedies or solace her case would admit. It was his melancholy and

yet not ungratifying office "to rock the cradle of declining age,"—a duty discharged with a tender solicitude for which no one would give him credit who had not been admitted within the walls of Monkwell, and seen him in the society of his wife.

"Tush!" petulantly ejaculated the merchant, when he was again seated in his carriage, "that woman is worse than 'poor dear Mrs. Neverwell' in the farce, who had taken all the bottles in the doctor's shop. Talks of nothing but herself and her maladies. What a life for poor Crab! As well live in an hospital." And then, as he reverted to his own happy exemption from all these domestic trials, the triumph with which he invariably chuckled over his lucky bachelorship broke out in energetic exclamations of "Well, thank God, *I* was never such a fool as to marry; *I* never lost an only child; *I* never had a sick, physic-taking, croaking wife.—Ha! ha!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE proprietor of the Manor-House, who rarely deviated from the habits he had acquired in earlier life, however inconsistent with the fashions of the day or with his present position in society, dined regularly at four o'clock, solacing himself afterwards with a pint of full-bodied port, which he found more hearty and congenial than the older and more attenuated wine so prized by professed epicures, and Brown never exceeded his prescribed quantity. Indeed he was methodical and exact in everything,—a fact which we have pleasure in recording, because we have generally observed that a love of material order involves a love of moral order. The platform and the low rails that surrounded the belfry on the top of the house having now been repaired, he had smoked his after-

noon chibouque in it several times, accompanied by John Trotman, who filled his amber bowl with the best Turkish tobacco, and whom he generally detained because he found him a good listener, in the intervals of his smoke-puffs, to his stories about olden times, and his adventures on board the *Arethusa*, or at Smyrna.

On one of these occasions John, having seen his master well supplied with every requisite, was about to leave him, when he was called back by the question, "What are you running away for? sit down, can't you? I had another chair brought up on purpose. I hate to see fellows standing when I'm sitting." John shook his head and pushed the chair away from him. "Whew!" cried the merchant, taking the amber from his mouth; "you're not going to mutiny, are you? You won't sit down! Who the deuce has put this nonsense into your head?"

"Mr. Jackson won't allow Sir Gregory to call, because you sit down with me."

"And who may Mr. Jackson be?"

"Sir Gregory's head man. Makes no odds,

he says, for a butler; but to sit down with a livery-servant,—no go!”

“John Trotman, you’re a fool! What the dickens, you stupid fellow! mayn’t I do as I like in my own house?” A shake of the head gave a negative reply.

“But, John, I don’t consider you merely as a servant. When I was knocked overboard by the swinging of that cursed boom off Civita Vecchia, and all the rest of the sailors were running, and swearing, and jabbering to lower the boat, didn’t you, without waiting a moment, or uttering a single word, jump into the water after me?”

“Done same for black cook.”

“I know you would have done the same for the black cook, but that does not cancel the obligation conferred on me.”

“Didn’t save you, saved yourself.”

“Yes, because I’m a good swimmer; but your good intentions were all the same.”

“Had none—didn’t know ’twas you.—Flummery!”

“Lookye, John Trotman; I hate to be contradicted, and I won’t be contradicted: so

hold your tongue and sit down directly. You shake your head, do you? You won't sit down?—Why, zounds! this is downright rebellion; and I've a great mind to give you warning."

"No such thing," replied John: with which words he made a bow and walked quietly away, though repeatedly commanded to stop. The man was perfectly right in what he said,—his master had not the smallest intention to give him warning; and this quarrel accordingly, like many preceding ones of a still graver character, proved only momentary, and passed off without any further allusion to it. As Brown never forgot a favour, however old might be its date, he found it much more difficult to forgive himself than his man, when the doggedness of the latter, or his own petulant obstinacy, had involved them in a squabble.

Among many good traits, Brown's besetting foibles were a profound reverence for wealth, and an unfastidious eye, not to say a positive obliquity of vision, as to the mode of its acquisition, if it were "in the

way of business,"—a saving and a very sweeping clause in his moral code. Hence his still-cherished respect for Sir Gregory Cavendish, notwithstanding Crab's disparaging mention of that worthy: hence his undisguised admiration of the juggling manœuvres by which Sir Gregory was reported to have outwitted the government in his contracts: hence his sudden resolution to call and renew his acquaintance with the Baronet, whose residence was not far from Gloucester. According to established forms, the first visit should have proceeded from Sir Gregory; but Adam despised etiquette, was curious to see how he would be received, and cared little or nothing as to the results of the overture he was about to make; so he drove over, to seek an interview with the rich proprietor of Cavendish Hall.

In this stately mansion everything was expressly calculated to display the powers, assert the supremacy, and challenge an admiration of opulence; a disregard of expense being much more manifest than any indication of taste in the general style of the

building, or in the details of the establishment. Powdered servants in flaring liveries, with embroidered shoulderknots and elbow-bobbing tags, ushered our visitant to the head of the stairs, where he was received by the butler or managing man, the consequential Mr. Jackson, at sight of whom he grasped his cane with a firmer clutch, as if he would have chastised him on the spot for his impertinent speech to Trotman. With a disdainful upturning of the nose, the butler eyed the new comer from top to toe, gave a slight shrug of the shoulders, received his name, announced him to the occupants of the drawing-room, closed the door, and took a hasty pinch of snuff, exclaiming, "What does the old quiz mean by calling at the Hall? We sha'n't visit him, I can tell him that."

On entering the spacious and gaudy drawing-room, so tricked out with embroidered ottomans, and fancy stools, and gewgaw settees, that it was difficult to find anything solid or safe to sit down upon, our visitant found the Baronet in his easy-chair,

with his gouty legs supported upon stools ; the Countess of Trumpington, a morning visiter, who paid assiduous court to the family, and flattered all their foibles, in the hope of securing Augusta and her fortune for her own profligate and penniless son ; together with Sir Gregory's dandy heir and affected daughter. Surprise and dismay sat upon the countenances of the two latter, as they heard the name of their visitant, and recollected that the Countess, their only titled friend, was in the room. " Angels and ministers of grace defend us !" whispered Algernon, hastily uplifting his eye-glass ; " pawsitively here's the strange beast, the nondescript male animal, that we saw last Sunday. Raily, now, people of rank and condition must cease going to church if they are to meet such horrid vulgarians."

" Give me my salts, Algernon," exclaimed the sister, in the same subdued voice ; " I shall faint,—I feel that I shall faint if the Countess——cannot we draw off her attention ?—How dreadfully unlucky !—What *shall* we do ?"

"Sorry, Sir Gregory, to see you tied by the leg," said Brown, after having at length seated himself in the only chair that seemed calculated to support him. "Odsbobs! I had nearly knocked down one of these daddy-long-legs tables,—difficult steerage through such an archipelago of kickshaws, nicknacks, and crinkum-crankums. Don't recollect me, I dare say. Well, I shouldn't have known you. Time plays the very deuce with us old fellows! My name's Adam Brown;—d'ye remember Adam Brown, the chemist and druggist's apprentice, in Aldgate?"

Sir Gregory gave him an alarmed and suspicious glance, became somewhat fidgety in his seat, grew rather red in the face, but said nothing, not having yet quite determined how to act. "Tush, man! you can't have forgotten me. You and I were cronies, you know. Well, I went out to Smyrna and the Levant as supercargo;—taken into partnership; became head of the firm,—Brown, Gubbins, and Co.;—heard of *them*, I reckon!—made a fortune in business, and come to

settle at Woodcote, because I ran away from it when I was a poticary's physic-boy, with only seven-and-ninepence in my pocket.—What d'ye think of that? Ha! ha!"

"What a parteecularly detestable wretch! We must pawsitively kick the fellah," said Algernon, in his sister's ear.

"I shall die! I shall sink into the earth if you don't get the horrid creature out of the room," was the reply. The Baronet, who was every minute growing more fidgety and getting redder in the face, at length said, in a faltering voice, and without venturing to look at his tormentor, "I believe, Sir, there must be some great mistake; never saw you afore; never knew anybody of the name of Adam Brown."

"Pooh, pooh! don't tell me: know better. You have forgotten yourself, not me. Think again; think of the Irish butter warehouse in Aldgate." Lady Trumington, who was perfectly well acquainted with the Baronet's origin, and who saw a storm brewing upon his fiery features, endeavoured to turn the conversation by suddenly ex-

claiming, "My dear Sir Gregory Cavenish, you really must accede to the wishes of the whole county, and suffer yourself to be put in nomination; for, you know, an immediate dissolution is expected. We must have a man of title and distinction; we cannot submit to the disgrace of being any longer represented by a low fellow, a mere merchant."

As this was touching Brown, however unintentionally, in the very apple of his eye, he instantly abandoned his attack upon the Baronet, and, turning towards the Countess, sternly exclaimed, "What, Madam, call a man a low fellow for being a merchant! Why, in this mercantile country, it's the highest, and noblest, and best title to which a fellow can aspire. Merchants, Madam, I would have you to know, are the greatest benefactors of mankind, by bringing distant nations acquainted with each other, and civilising them; and making the superfluities of one supply the wants of the other; and spreading arts, and knowledge, and science, and all that sort of thing, over

the whole world. Zooks, Madam! where would be half your great charities without our rich merchants? Look at Guy's,—look at Whittington and his cat, and Sir Thomas Gresham and his grasshopper, and scores of others; and then, Madam, you will perhaps condescend to look less sourly at me, Adam Brown, late of the firm of Brown, Gubbins, and Co."

This tirade, delivered with a vehemence that betrayed very little respect for the rank of the party addressed, having determined the Baronet to disclaim all previous acquaintance with its utterer, he plucked up his courage, and, looking as little terrified as he could, exclaimed in a pompous tone, "Mr. Black,—I think you said your name was——"

"Black me no Blacks: my name's Adam Brown; and that name you know as well as I do."

"Well then, Mr. Brown, allow me to tell you that you are labouring under a sad mistake. I never saw you in my life,—never knew any one of the name of Brown. How

do I know that your name is Brown ? You may be an impostor."

"And you *are* one," cried Brown, firing at the term,—“a sham, a counterfeit, a Brummagem.—Nay, it's no use your starting, and staring, and getting as red in the gills as a turkey-cock. You're no true Cavendish, I tell you,—your real name is Gregory Gibleet.” A faint scream burst from Augusta, as she ejaculated, “Oh the horrid, low, scandalous libeller ! Dear Lady Trumington ! I hope you don't believe a syllable of what he says. The wretch wants to extort money from papa by charging him with this odious name. Algernon, why don't you have him turned out of the room ?”

“Allow me, Sir, to assure you that you are raily redeeculously mistaken,” said the brother ; “and permit me at the same time to have the very uncawmon pleasure of opening the door for your voluntary exit, unless you should prefer a compulsory one.”

“Mistaken !” resumed Brown ; “why, don't I see the very wart on your father's nose that I once covered with ink when he fell asleep in the back shop ?”

"Many people, and very clever people too, have been deceived as to personal identity," observed the Countess, willing to spare any further exposure.

"Lord love you, Madam! there's no mistake. Why, Sir Gregory, don't you remember your falling off the ladder with a tub of butter, and being brought into our shop all covered with blood,—I was a chemist's shopman then, Madam,—and my calling you ever after Gory Gible, instead of Gregory Gible? And a very good joke it was."

"Where's Jackson? where are the servants? Algernon, ring the bell!" cried the Baronet, in an agony at these most inopportune reminiscences. "Really, Mr. Black, this beats everything from a person upon whom I never before set my eyes! Oh, Jackson, here you are at last. Take away this fellow, and never let him darken my doors again. How dare you let him in? Take him away, take him away; kick him down stairs."

"Yes, Sir Gregory; certainly, Sir Gregory," replied the managing man, again

ringing the bell: "I'll order the servants,—I have nothing to do with the stairs. Here, John, Thomas, Joseph."

"And, harkye, Jackson!" cried the dandy son, receding from the immediate scene of action as he spoke; "you may as well tell them to introduce the gentleman to the horse-pond when he has got to the bottom of the stairs."

Augusta had sunk into a chair at the further corner of the room, holding a bottle of salts to her nose; the Countess, affecting to look profoundly horrified, although in reality she was not unamused at the absurdity of the scene, placed herself upon a settee and quietly awaited its *dénouement*; and in the mean while three livery servants, having received orders to that effect from their commanding officer, Mr. Jackson, approached the author of all this disturbance with the apparent purpose of executing a forcible ejection.

"Paws off, rascals!" cried Brown, clapping his hat on his head and brandishing his cane, "or I'll break every bone in your bodies. I'm

much more anxious to go than you can be to turn me out." With which words he made two or three sturdy steps towards the door, when he stopped, took off his hat, and said in a less excited voice, as he turned round and bowed to the Countess and Augusta, "Ladies, I hope you're not frightened. I'm not come to beg, borrow, nor steal; and I shall go away as quietly as I came; but, when a fellow's disowned by one of his earliest friends, called an impostor, and threatened with being introduced to the horse-pond in return for a civil visit, no wonder if he gets into a bit of passion." Replacing his hat he strode forwards towards the door, which was held wide open by the major-domo, at sight of whom he again flourished his cane in such a menacing way, that the functionary in question started back so suddenly as to knock his head with considerable violence against the bracket of a chandelier.

"I can tell by the sound," cried Brown, "that there is nothing in that empty noddle of yours; so I conclude you are Mr. Jackson, the jackanapes who was so shocked at my

allowing John Trotman to sit down with me. Harkye, sirrah ! I had much rather sit down with an honest man in livery than with a saucy knave out of it ; so mind you never presume to take a chair in my presence."

He had now reached the door, but ere he quitted the apartment he again turned round, crying out to the Baronet, " Well, my old friend, Gory Gible, — Beg pardon, I mean Sir Gregory Cavendish, Baronet ! — if you had called upon me in the canvass apron and sleeves that you wore when first I knew you, I should have given you a hearty welcome, instead of threatening you with the horse-pond or a kicking. A kicking, truly ! will *you* be kind enough to bestow it upon me, — or *you*, sir, — or *you* ? " These words were severally addressed with a courteous bow to each of the footmen, but, as they unanimously declined an affirmative answer, notwithstanding the polite solicitation of his manner, he walked deliberately down-stairs, entered his carriage, and was driven homewards. His chafing mood vented itself at first in contemptuous ridicule of

the Baronet's vanity, insolence, and folly, and of the subjection in which he was held by his family,—ebullitions which were so far successful in appeasing his wrath, that he was presently enabled to chuckle at the consternation he had excited in the whole establishment. Other reflections assisted in restoring his good humour, and, as he never lost an opportunity of felicitating himself on the happiness of his bachelor estate, he exclaimed, in great triumph of spirit, “ Well, *I* have no dandy fool of a son, no conceited minx of a daughter, to turn my head, and make a fool of me by attempting to persuade me that I am a fine gentleman. *I* was never caught in the noose of matrimony,—*I* never married. Ha ! ha ! ”

Lady Trumpington, although unacquainted with all the details of the Baronet's early history, knew perfectly well, as we have already intimated, that he had sprung from nothing, and had originally borne the name of Giblest, so that she fully believed the truth of the little episodes to which Brown had made allusion. But she was also fully aware

of the Baronet's weakness ; she knew how to play her cards in every sense ; and experience having taught her that the most irresistible flattery is that which is the least merited, she dilated for some time on the antiquity of the Cavendish family, with which, as she asserted, some of her ancestors had once the honour of being connected, and affected to treat the revelations of the recent visitant as the ravings of a disordered intellect. This consolatory solution was eagerly seized by Sir Gregory and his family, the former declaring that he had detected it instantly in the fellow's wild eye and furious gestures ; while Algernon affirmed that nothing but compassion for his unhappy state had prevented his kicking him down-stairs ; though he forgot to explain how this feeling could be reconciled with the orders to that effect which he had issued to the majordomo. The last-mentioned "gentleman's gentleman," who had been solely engaged because he had once lived in a nobleman's family, and was presumed to understand the proper management

of a household of distinction, was so much flustered by the danger he had incurred, and the knock he had received from the bracket, that he was fain to swallow two glasses of Madeira and retire to his room for the remainder of the day. Wealth, in-occupation, overfeeding, indolence, and gout had so weakened the faculties of Sir Gregory, that he had become a mere puppet in the hands of his family, and his factotum, Jackson. Had he retained the shrewdness of his early days, he might have known that no man is ridiculous for what he is, but for pretending to be what he is not. In this age of universal publicity, disguises are always foolish, because they are always vain. "Were we," says Rochefoucault, "to take as much pains to *be* what we ought as to disguise what we *are*, we might appear like ourselves without being at the trouble of any disguise at all."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE most frequent inmates of the Manor-House, whether as guests or morning visitors, were the Latimer family. There was not much congeniality of taste between Adam Brown and them, their respective pursuits and habits having hitherto been as dissimilar as possible; but he was in want of their society, he felt most amicably disposed towards them, and, where these tendencies exist, the sympathies of our common nature will soon blend the most opposite characters into a cordial intimacy. So placid, so good, so affectionate a creature as the mother, it was impossible not to love; but, notwithstanding her perfect resignation to her fate, and the gratitude she constantly expressed for the blessings she enjoyed, there was a

tone of pensiveness, an occasional melancholy in her quietude, which displeased the merchant. It is worthy of remark that, when persons are in any way affected with a depression of spirits, the irritability usually accompanying that frame of mind is more especially manifested towards those who are labouring under a similar affection. The sadness or *ennui* in others that aggravates their own is an annoyance; they seem to think it an impertinence that anybody should be moping but themselves; they want to be amused and roused out of their tristful moods, not to be confirmed in them by the influence of sympathetic dulness; hence they find nothing so provoking as the sight of a rueful visage, and the presence of a taciturn or gloomy companion.

After the first bustle of his instalment had subsided, after all the remarkable places in the neighbourhood had been visited, and the novelty incident to his change of life had ceased to stimulate a mind craving for some other excitement when it could no longer find incessant occupation, Adam Brown

began to discover that, in having his whole time thrown upon his hands, he had a very rickety, troublesome, and insatiable child to nurse. Occasional dejections of mind, to which he had hitherto been a stranger, were the consequence of his compulsory idleness, while the inability to shake off these conscious frettings of a spirit, which, though it would not easily wear out, soon began to rust out, rendered him peevish and splenetic,—an infirmity which first visited itself upon poor Mrs. Latimer. “Zooks, Madam !” he petulantly exclaimed, after they had both maintained a silence of some little duration, “it’s your turn to speak next ; why do you imitate John Trotman, and play mumchance in this way, when I have been talking till I am almost broken-winded ?”

“Indeed, Sir ! I was thinking that I had hardly heard your voice this morning.”

“No wonder, Madam, when you keep your own mouth as close as a mouse-trap. A fellow can’t talk to himself for half an hour at a time, like those strutting and ranting fellows one sees on the stage.”

“Certainly not, but it seemed to me that you were a cup too low to-day, and I was afraid—”

“A cup too low ! what do you mean by that ? Never had the dumps, nor the dismals, nor the blue devils in all my life. Not such a fool, when I’ve got everything to make me happy. If there’s one thing I hate more than another, it is a dismal, dumpish, down-in-the-mouth, and all-for-nothing melancholy.”

“There I agree with you ; such a discontented feeling is a sort of ingratitude to Heaven. I hope I never give way to it. It would be very wrong in me.”

“Then, why do you put on such a woe-begone face, and sit there staring at the fender without throwing a word at me, good, bad, or indifferent ? Odsbobs, Madam ! I had rather be abused like a pickpocket than moped and bored.”

“I really beg your pardon if I have unintentionally added to your dejection.”

“There you go again ! I tell you I have no dejection. Never was in better

spirits,—quite rampant, hilarious, uproarious.”

“To confess the truth, I believe I was thinking at the moment of my poor dear husband.”

“More shame for you! When you are in my company, Mrs. Latimer, I don’t want any such thoughts. They are all very well at home, but you should put on a gayer mind, just as you put on a gayer dress, when you go a visiting. If you have anything pleasant, I’ll trouble you; when you have got the doldrums, you may keep them to yourself. I don’t want to say anything rude or personal—far from it—but I never was fond of a slow coach; so prithee, my good Mrs. Latimer, try to be as cheerful and as wide-awake as I am.”

Such reproaches and exhortations are very apt to aggravate the evil they would remedy, for nobody can be mirthful at command, and the fact of our depression being noticed only tends to increase it. The present instance, however, was the exception that confirmed the rule, for Mrs. Latimer,

in smiling obedience to the injunction she had received, began to talk away with unusual volubility,—an effort which she continued until an audible snore from the companion who had just boasted of being so wide-awake warned her that she was racking her brain and wasting her breath for nothing. These attacks of morning drowsiness had recently begun to steal over our retired merchant, while a long nap after dinner had become a matter of course.

His restless activity, which “deemed nought done while aught remained to do,” had put the mechanical genius and the amateur carpentry of Walter in constant requisition, so that scarcely a day passed in which he had not spent several hours in the Manor-House, planning, executing, or superintending the alterations and improvements; but when these were completed, the proprietor of the mansion found, with equal regret and surprise, that he no longer took the same pleasure in the society of his young friend. In point of fact, they had very few ideas in common; they had moved in

totally different spheres. Walter had seen little or nothing of that world in which the merchant had been such a busy actor ; his studies and occupations had been confined to the *belles lettres*, of which Brown knew nothing, and to drawing and music, in which the old gentleman took no pleasure. The same remark was partially applicable to his brother, but Allan's temperament was more vivacious ; his reading had been more discursive, particularly in books of travels ; his mind was better able to accommodate itself to the taste, and even to the want of taste, of those with whom he associated. Gratitude for Brown's kindness to his mother prompted him to consult his humours,—his power of adaptation ensured success ; his natural spirit and cheerfulness were additional charms in the eyes of an old man who wanted to be roused out of a growing lethargy and dulness, which he hated himself for feeling, though he could not shake them off, and it is therefore hardly necessary to add that Allan soon grew into a prodigious favourite, and was urged

to become a daily visitant at the Manor-House.

Among the peculiarities which now began to develop themselves in the character of Brown was a morbid apprehension that, being the richest man in the place, everybody was trying to cheat and overreach him. His own mercantile principle (or want of principle), that, in the way of business, all advantages were fair, rendered him suspicious of others, and, though quite willing to be liberal in his expenditure and to maintain an establishment suitable to his fortune, he became captious and wranglesome in adjusting the accounts of his tradespeople. As it invariably occurs in such cases, the cost of his instalment in the Manor-House considerably exceeded his expectations, and, as an equally common consequence, he lost his temper when he saw that he was likely to lose his money. Lawsuits were threatened, and his irritability would have so far conquered his good sense as to have subjected him to the additional plunder of legal proceedings, had not Allan fortunately betaken

himself to a respectable surveyor of Cheltenham, with whom they were distantly connected, and to whom most of the tradespeople were personally known. By the intervention of this person some of the charges were considerably reduced, others were proved to be just, the merchant's wrath was appeased, and the accounts were all amicably settled,—a result which tended to raise Allan into still higher estimation, not so much because it put an end to these fretting differences as because it seemed to indicate business-like habits and a certain degree of skill in negotiation.

Another suggestion of Allan, which tended still further to ingratiate him with Brown, because it enabled the latter to get pleasantly rid of some additional hours that might otherwise have hung heavily upon his hands, was the purchase of a billiard-table, which was fixed in the large old-fashioned hall. In the Casino, at Smyrna, he had occasionally practised this delightful game, and he was by no means sorry to have a new resource in his house, as well as an addi-

tional attraction for visitors, now that he began to feel the lonesomeness of his position. With his customary eagerness he betook himself to this pastime, generally in company with Allan and his brother, although he challenged every male visitant to a trial of skill. His constitutional impatience would never have allowed him to become a good player; yet he had been so long accustomed to succeed in all his undertakings, that he could not bear to be beaten, and took no pains to conceal his mortification when he lost the game, or his triumph when he won it.

Allan, whose somewhat careless and impetuous temperament disqualified him from making much progress, was generally a loser: but Walter's accurate eye, steady hand, and cautious mode of play soon gave him a decided mastery, although the game was quite new to him. Trifling as it was, this circumstance proved galling to Brown, who generally declined encountering him, and waited till he could make up a match with his brother; and partly from

this most frivolous ground of preference, corroborating his previous partiality, did the strong-minded or rather the strong-willed Adam Brown eventually determine to adopt Allan as his son and heir.

No sooner had he formed this important resolution than he hastened to impart it to Mrs. Latimer, for the excitement of divulging a secret gave an acceptable, though momentary, relief to the wearisome monotony of his mind. "My dear Madam," he began, as they were seated together in her little parlour, "you are aware that I consider myself under great obligations to my good friend Latimer—your late husband." The widow bowed and looked grave. "Nay, now, don't pull a long face; you know I hate dumps and doldrums, and, besides, you'll be for laughing, not crying, when you've heard what I'm going to say. Yes, it was he who first put me in the way of making my money, and therefore I think that my money ought to go back into his family. Don't you?"

"Dear Mr. Brown, it's very good of you

to say so, but you have done a great deal for us already : we are very grateful for all your past favours, and I'm sure none of us have the least wish to——”

“Nay, don't be alarmed ; I'm not going to do anything more for you at present ; but one can't live for ever, you know ; and though they say that the asthma don't shorten a fellow's life, I know something else that does, —ay, and I not only know it, but feel it.”

“Dear me ! what can that be ? ”

“Old age, Madam, old age—a complaint that gets worse every day, and which no doctor in the world can cure. Now, you are aware, and if not I tell you, that I have no relation in the wide world but a nephew who once cheated me out of seven hundred and fifty pounds hard money,—swindled me out of it, Madam, by a sham security—took me in—diddled me—an insult which I never can and never will forgive ; in short, the fellow turned out a complete scamp. Perhaps he may be at this very moment at Botany Bay,—and if not, I am sure that he deserves to be.”

"But may he not live to reform, and perhaps to pay you back what he owes?" urged the kind-hearted lady.

"He can't un-cheat me, he can't un-diddle me, he can't un-swindle me, even if he would, which I don't believe. No, no; I have done with the fellow for ever. Hope I shall never see his face again—don't want to be disgraced: and so, to make a long story short, for I am beginning to wheeze, it is my present intention to leave my fortune, on certain conditions, to your son Allan."

"Gracious goodness! Mr. Brown, you don't mean it? How very, very good—how truly generous! How shall I ever—dear! dear! I cannot tell you how deeply——" Unable to conclude the sentence, she clasped her hands together, and turned her head aside to conceal her unbidden tears.

"Why, you're not going to whimper," cried her companion, "because I talk of leaving a fortune to your son? If you don't like it, I can bequeath it to an hospital."

"Forgive me, pray forgive me," sobbed

the widow ; “they were tears of joy, of gratitude.”

“ I don’t know that you have anything to be grateful about. Harkye, Madam ; I told you it was my *present* intention ; but I’m a queer old chap—I may change my mind,—very likely I shall ; I may live a hundred years—will if I can. All will depend on Allan’s conduct. If I continue to like him as well as I do now, he will be all the richer. If I don’t, he won’t ; and that he mayn’t have his head turned by fancying himself an heir, it is my will and pleasure that my intention—mind, my present intention—should remain a secret. Do you understand ? ”

“ Perfectly, perfectly ; but did you say that in your great generosity you meant to leave all to Allan ? I thought that if dear Walter were to have —— ”

“ Dear Walter will have none of my money. I mean to make an heir—to entail the Manor-House—to stipulate that its new owner shall take the name of Brown. If you don’t like the terms, you may declare off, and I’ll cry Nothing done.”

“Heaven forbid ! I have no right to dictate, or even to suggest ; only dear Walter *is* such a kind, affectionate, gentle, good creature.”

“Well, I shan’t make him less so by leaving money to his brother, shall I ?”

“Oh ! no, no ; nothing can do that. His generous and loving heart will even rejoice that Allan should have been preferred.”

“Then you needn’t say anything more about it ; and so, Madam, I wish you a good morning—Nay, nay, I won’t hear a word—I don’t want any thanks—I hate flummery, and that I have told you more than once ; let’s have none of it. Ha ! ha !”

Knowing the deep, the unalterable attachment of the twins, an affection which had hitherto rejected anything like the smallest separation of interests, Mrs. Latimer almost regretted that she had suggested a provision for her younger son, justly dear as he was to her. “It is all the same—it is all the same,” she murmured to herself. “Whatever Allan has will be Walter’s—whatever Walter has will be Allan’s. Never were two brothers so fond of each other :

never were two sons so fond of their mother. What a happy woman I am!" Her next resolution, as she walked rapidly along, was not to suffer herself to be unduly elated by this prospect of family enrichment; to eschew everything like pride or consequence; to preserve a becoming humility in the eyes of her neighbours, whatever they might suspect as to her future greatness. Her heart swelled at the moment with an irrepressible exultation, but, in the determination not to betray it by any outward gesture, she curtsied respectfully to the milkwoman and to the postman, whom she met upon the common, to the no small surprise of those functionaries, who had been heretofore saluted with a familiar nod, and a "Good day."

Mrs. Latimer was a conscientious woman; she would never knowingly betray a confidence—never divulge a secret confided to her; nor did she in this instance: it did not leak out of her mouth, but it escaped, it oozed forth, it evaporated, as it were, from every pore of her body, every expression of her face, every emanation of her mind.

Her countenance, usually so sedate, frequently lighted up, without any apparent cause, into simpering smiles ; she talked unconsciously to herself, imploring blessings upon her son's benefactor, and protesting that she should never be able to call Allan by the name of Brown ; and when any allusion was made to the merchant's will, and the probable bestowal of his property, she drew herself up with an air of profound mystery and reserve, and preserved an inflexible though smiling silence, that manifested both her knowledge of that document and her perfect satisfaction with its arrangements. Nor was Brown himself a very vigilant custodian of his own secret, often suffering hints and innuendoes to escape him, which were eagerly caught up and repeated by the by-standers. It was one of his habits, a remnant of his mercantile propensities, always to play billiards for a pecuniary consideration, however small. "A fellow can't feel any interest," he said, "when he's playing for nothing ; as bad as being supercargo of a ship in ballast ; and so, Master Allan, take care of your sixpences."

Such was the modest stake for which they usually contended, but it was sufficient to stimulate his exertions and to enhance his gratification when he pocketed his winnings. These, after a morning's play, would sometimes amount to two or three shillings, and he had been more than once heard to exclaim, as if to console his adversary for his loss, "Well, well, Allan, my boy! never mind; you'll have your revenge in the end: shouldn't wonder if you were to pocket lots of my money one of these days. No knowing. Mind you come early to-morrow."

By none were these significant inklings more eagerly snatched up and applied than by Captain Molloy, whose preconceived suspicions as to Brown's probable successor in the Manor-House estate they tended so strongly to confirm.

Determined, however, to make assurance doubly sure, he played off a little stratagem upon the simple-minded Mrs. Latimer, by running up to her one morning, seizing both her hands, which he shook most cordially, and exclaiming, in a voice of great apparent

sincerity, "By the powers! my dear Mrs. Latimer, I congratulate you most heartily; by my soul do I. So the secret's out at last—your son Allan is to be old Brown's heir."

"Dear me, Captain Molloy! who told you so? how could you ever have learnt it? I'm sure I never divulged it to a breathing soul."

"You know it to be true, then."

"Who—I? Yes—that is to say, no—" stammered the widow, hesitating at a direct falsehood, and fearing to make any confession. "It was you who said the secret was out—who told you? I never did—I wouldn't for all the world have it thought that I——"

"I can bear witness to that," laughed the Captain with a knowing look.—"Mum's the word—mute as a fish: I say nothing neither,—only one thing at least, and that I'm prepared to maintain, even with my life's blood, if necessary."

"Goodness me, Captain! what can that be?"

"Why, that a nod's as good as a wink

to a blind horse." With which words he walked rapidly away, muttering to himself, "No time to be lost—I must see Matilda,—set to work immediately."

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CHAPTER IX.

ON a dark stormy evening towards the end of autumn, John Chubbs sat dozing and half drunk on the cross-bench of his homeward-bound market-cart, rocking from side to side with vibrations that soon would have destroyed his equilibrium, but for the regular jog-trot of his progress, and the instinctive care with which his old horse Wellington not only avoided collision with the few vehicles they met, but contrived to preserve the unbroken level of the road. It sounds like a desecration that the *clarum et venerabile nomen*—the name of which, beyond all others, our country and our age have the most reason to be proud,—should be bestowed upon a quadruped, however noble his qualities; but the sponsorial responsibility rests with John Chubbs, whose nomination we are compelled

to adopt, however we may quarrel with his taste.

By his singular fleetness and docility in his charger days, the animal had rendered special, perhaps vital, services to his present owner, who, not forgetting the soldier in the farmer, looked upon him rather as a friend and companion than a mere beast of burthen. John had started before daybreak for Cheltenham, with an assortment of farm produce, and his marketing, though not unsuccessful in the first instance, had been rendered nugatory, as usual, by his unfortunate propensity to tippling. Decoyed into a public-house, he had indulged his besetting sin till he became half intoxicated, when his knavish companions had engaged him in play and potations pottle deep, until they had cleared his pockets, after which they considerately helped him into his cart, well knowing that his discreet old charger would take him up to the farm gate in perfect safety. No interest, however, in his company, his cups, or his cards and dice, prevented our toper from reeling to the stable at the proper time to

feed his favourite, which he always did with his own hands, standing by his side as he devoured his provender, patting his neck, and hiccoughing the most affectionate and endearing terms as he caressed him ; in return for which friendly attentions Wellington, who really seemed to be sensible of the fact, whenever his driver was "the worse for liquor," piloted the cart in the skilful way we have been describing, and had never hitherto failed in drawing it home without accident.

On the evening in question, John Chubbs ought to have been more than usually sober, instead of tipsy, since he had been intrusted with a commission to execute for "the Squire," whom it was by no means his interest to offend, seeing that he was so much in arrear for rent. Mrs. Glossop had suggested to her master that he required an easy chair for what she termed his *boo-door*, meaning the little room in which he kept his account-books. "Ods bobs! so I do—never thought of it afore," was the reply,—
"Well, then, order one to be sent over from

the upholsterer at Cheltenham ; but mind, I won't have any of those flimsy, rickety, tippie-topple things, like a bandbox with a back to it, such as they offered me at old Gory Gible's ; as well sit down upon a basket of eggs. I like to feel that I have something solid and trustworthy under me, something that I can take a comfortable nap in ; mind that—I don't care for fashions." In conformity with these instructions, Mrs. Glossop wrote to the upholsterer, and requested Chubbs to bring back the *fotool*, as she called it, in his market-cart, with the double motive of saving the cost of its conveyance (for she was a most thrifty manager), and of preparing an agreeable surprise for her master, who could hardly expect his orders to be so promptly executed.

It had accordingly been stowed at the back of the cart, whose driver went nodding along the road, too much fuddled to pay any attention, except by a waking start of a few moments, to the storm that came blustering up in fitful gusts from the far west behind him.

He had reached Blackhurst Level, where the road, closely skirted on either side by wild glades and clumps of firs, or compact masses of underwood, was already dark with the shades of evening, when a rush of wind, that nearly upset the arm-chair, roused him from his lethargy, and occasioned him to open his eyes with another start. From the obscurity surrounding him, he at first thought that the night had set in, and began to wonder what could have made him so late ; but as he cast his looks forwards, he beheld the mill on the summit of the opposite ascent still lighted up with a red and lurid glare from the last rays of the setting sun, which, contrasting with the dark clouds behind, threw it into bold relief, as its arms, like those of a living giant, whirled rapidly round, in apparent defiance of the battling elements. Looking next towards the rear to account for the unusual gloom, and perceiving that a heavy storm was gathering, Chubbs buttoned up his coat, and by a peculiar whistle, perfectly understood by his horse, urged him to mend his speed. The distant

thunder and the wind-gusts, at first muttering and low, but gathering in loudness and violence as they approached, sounded like the artillery and the trumpet-blasts of an advancing and victorious host, before which a fanciful observer might have imagined that everything was rushing away in terror. The fir cones and the vari-coloured leaves of autumn that had lain in little heaps by the roadside like patches of mosaic, and were now whirled rapidly along, might have been deemed the intermingled soldiers of a defeated army flying confusedly from the battlefield. Some of the lighter leaves were seen whisking upon the air, as if, like the flying-fish, they sought in a new element a momentary respite from their pursuers; but they soon fell, again to be confounded with the mass of fugitives. Even the trees by the roadside appeared to stretch away their arms from the sweeping blast, as if they implored assistance, since their roots prevented their seeking safety by joining the general flight. The clouds above, and the clouds of dust below, sped furiously along; a flash of

lightning threw a spectral glare over the dim glades, upon which the pall of a deeper darkness immediately descended; a sharp clap of thunder announced the progress of the tempest, and the old charger, pointing his ears and neighing, broke into a quicker trot, as if he were again preparing himself for a charge. In the momentary lull succeeding the last thunder-clap, Chubbs heard a loud voice, at no great distance behind him, calling out—"Hallo! stop; hilloa! stop, stop!" a summons which he did not at first feel the smallest inclination to obey, for two or three recent robberies in that lonesome part of the road had entailed a bad character upon it. The old soldier, however, liked not the notion of running away, a practice to which he had never been accustomed—he had little or nothing to lose—it was not likely that highwaymen would be abroad at so early an hour—it might be some wearied wayfarer in want of a cast—in consideration of all which probabilities, for his muddled brain had been somewhat cleared by his long nap, he hastily buttoned his Waterloo medal

(his most valued property) inside his waistcoat, seized a stout stick to be prepared for every emergency, and stopped his cart.

As it chanced that this halt had occurred where an opening of the glades on either side allowed the twilight to penetrate, Chubbs might well stare aghast, and distrust the evidence of his senses, as he contemplated the apparition, for such might it be almost deemed, that now came running up. He beheld an old man habited in the black robes of a monk, his waist cinctured by a cord, from which depended a rosary and crucifix; his head was bald except at the back, whence tufts of grizzled hair came round, uniting with a venerable beard of the same hue; while the deep furrows of his face and forehead bespoke a weight of years little in accordance with the vigour and activity of his motions. Nor was his language in better accordance with his garb, his first words, as soon as he recovered his breath, being an angry exclamation of—"Curse you, clodpole! why didn't you stop sooner? I have been bawling and scampering after you

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till I'm half dead. Why didn't you pull up?"

"Because I didn't choose," replied the sturdy farmer, grasping his stick, and still preserving his bewildered stare; "who the deuce is to halt at your word of command? Who are you—what are you—what do you want?"

"I want a short cast, for which you shall be well paid," replied the figure, in a softer voice; "and there's your money in advance, to show that I don't want to bilk you." With these words he thrust a crown-piece into John's hand, and without waiting a reply, vaulted nimbly into the cart, and seated himself in the arm-chair, exclaiming, "Now then, farmer, quick! quick! on with you; and if you'll put old Dobbin into a gallop, you shall have another crown-piece."

"I don't gallop him for nobody," replied John, giving a chirp that instantly started his horse, "but his quick trot's quite as good, and that you'll say if you could only see his action. But what in the name of wonder be you, in this here outlandish garb?"

“ Me? why, don’t you see? I am a free and accepted mason, going to a meeting of my lodge. We always meet at night—that is, whenever it proves stormy.”

“ Well, that’s a rum go, any how. And where do you meet?”

“ At the place you are going to; I forget the name of it.”

“ Gammon! you won’t bamboozle me with such a cock-and-a-bull story as that. You’re no more a freemason than I am.”

“ You’re right for once in your life, perfectly right, Master Clodpole. I am surveying this country for a railway line, and here you see are my implements of trade, my line and rule, my compass, my quadrant, and my theodolite. In short, old Chaw-bacon, I am a civil engineer.”

“ You arn’t a civil nothink, or you wouldn’t call nobody names, and if you do so again I may chance to pitch you right out of the cart. I tell you I’m not to be humbugged. I see no engineer’s tools about you, not I; nothink but a cross and a string of beads.”

“ True, true, you have found me out; I have no doubt you can see as far into a millstone as a blind horse. Harkee, my fine old fellow ! can you keep a secret ? ”

“ Ay, when I’m sober, as I am now.”

“ Then lend me your ear, and never divulge what I am about to tell you. I am a missionary sent over by the Pope to convert the English to popery.”

“ Well, that do look more likely like, for when I were soldiering in Spain, among the Papishes, I see lots of monks and friars, and such black cattle, just the same as you be. But harkye, domine, for that’s what we used to call ’em abroad, don’t go for to think that you’ve listed me into your regiment by the crown you tipped me just now; I’m not to be caught that way.”

“ No, no; you’re welcome to it without any crimping or recruiting, and to half as much more when you mend you pace.—Gee ho, Dobbin ! I suppose your sick wife is waiting for this comfortable arm-chair, so you had better make haste home.”

“ It baint for my wife, but for the Squire.”

“The Squire! what Squire?”

“Master Adam Brown of the Manor-House.”

“Adam Brown!” exclaimed the stranger with a start of surprise: “what Adam Brown? Where does he come from? How old is he? Who is he? What is he? Speak! speak!”

“Why, he do come last from some outlandish place beyond seas, but I don’t mind the name on’t just now.”

“Smyrna! was it Smyrna?”

“Ay, you’ve hit the nail on the head; that’s it, and no mistake.”

“And Adam Brown is an old quiz of sixty or more, that wears a pigtail wig, and cinnamon-coloured clothes, and carries a gold-headed cane?”

“That’s he; you’ve just nicked him.”

“And where is he now living?”

“Why, at the Manor-House at Woodcote.”

“The same! the same! I have heard, him say that he was born at Woodcote.—So, so, so! Adam Brown is at Woodcote, is

he? Who would have thought it? This is fortunate, indeed!"

By this time they had reached the foot of the hill, when the horse, as had invariably been his custom, slackened his pace into a walk, and at the same moment voices were heard shouting in the rear. "They are coming,—the villains are upon me,—I shall be nabbed at last!" suddenly exclaimed the stranger with an oath. "We must gallop up the hill, or I am regularly done for." So saying he snatched the whip, and was about to let fall a heavy blow upon the horse, when Chubbs, arresting his arm, cried out, "Paws off, master; 'ware whip! If you offer to touch Wellington, I'll pitch ye head over heels into the road. He's an old soldier and won't stand it,—no more won't I."

"Why, I thought soldiers were accustomed to be flogged!"

"Ay, them as are Christians and rational creeturs, but not the poor brute beasts; so down with the whip or bundle out, for I shall walk him all the way up the hill."

Loud and eager voices, and the footsteps of people running rapidly along the road, were again borne upon the wind, at sound of which the stranger, uttering a volley of execrations, leaped from the cart, and rushing along an opening by the wayside, bristled with stumps of newly-felled trees, made for the thicket by which it was bounded. Favoured by the gloom, he might perhaps have escaped the notice of his pursuers, but that, at this moment, a charcoal-burner opened the door of his solitary log-hut: a fire was blazing within it; the light fell upon the fugitive; the men who held him in chase set up a new halloo, as they ran at full speed in pursuit, and the whole party soon disappeared amid the trees, though Chubbs heard their shouts at intervals, as he proceeded up the hill, until the sounds were lost in the distance, or drowned in the greater noise of the increasing tempest.

The clamour of the storm, the occupation of protecting himself and the arm-chair against the rain, but above all, the startling and mysterious adventure he had just wit-

nessed, had effectually sobered our farmer, who sat revolving the occurrence in his mind in a deeper and more puzzling perplexity the more he endeavoured to solve the enigma. But for the little struggle when he had wrenched the whip from his hand, and had fully ascertained that his companion was *boná fide* flesh and blood, he might have suspected him, notwithstanding his sable hue, to be a ghost playing truant before the proper midnight hour, and hurrying back to the burial-place whence he had eloped.

In the absence of any more plausible solution, he was obliged to credit the stranger's last assertion, backed as it was by his dress, and set him down for a real monk and missionary; but why so reverend a character should swear like a trooper, be chased along the highroad as if he were a runaway gaol-bird, and confess that he would be "regularly done for" if overtaken, he could not even surmise. Wellington, who thought he knew the way home better than his master, and who nine times out of ten would have been

right in that impression, could hardly be prevailed upon to leave the turning that led to the farm, though he did so at last, and arrived in due time at the Manor-House.

“*Mon doo !*” exclaimed Mrs. Glossop, who had been anxiously expecting the arm-chair ; “ where have you been a-dawdling all this blessed day, John Chubbs ? I was quite in tribilation, *au desespaw*, as the French say. I see you’ve brought the *fotool*, however ; but what a *mauvais tong* night !— I fear it will be wet to the skin.”

“ If the chair baint, I be,” said the farmer, taking off part of his wraps, and scattering the water from his hat as he swung it to the ground.

“ *O ciel !*” exclaimed the housekeeper, into whose right eye a dirty drop had been accidentally whirled. “ Was there ever such a *bel sauvage* ! Do mind what you are about. You have given me quite a *mal au dong* in the eye. Here, John Trotman, help him out with the chair ; we must have it to the kitchen fire to be dried. Come, *depeshay voo*, you move like a pig of lead.”

"Better move than look like pig," blurted John, slowly measuring the housekeeper's portly figure, as if his eyes found some difficulty in getting round it.

"Marry, come up!" was the quick reply: "any but such a *bate sauvage* as you would know that *embonepoint* is a great beauty; so none of your nonsense, if you please. *Allons*, Mister Saucebox! I can't keep waiting for you."

"Another thing you can't keep."

"What's that?"

"Your temper."

"It's false, you great *cul de sac*; you good-for-nothing *bone-bouche* of a fellow! On the contrary, I was always remarkable for the sweetness and acerbity of my disposition. Now then, Chubbs," continued the fussy housekeeper, "push the chair forward, for it's heavy, I see. John Trotman! you take hold of the front leg, and let it down gently for fear of breaking the casters. What had I better hold, myself?"

"Your tongue," said John, drily, at the same time depositing the chair safely on the hall floor.

“*Ma foi!*” exclaimed Mrs. Glossop, who had fortunately not heard the last jibe, or it would probably have provoked an angry rejoinder; “it’s the very thing,—quite a *bijoo* of a *fotool*, I do declare. But master mustn’t *sassoir* himself down in it till it has been thoroughly aired.”

“And who do you think were the last chap that sot down in it?” asked Chubbs—an inquiry that entailed a full, true, and particular account of his strange adventure on the road, to which even Trotman could not listen without a stolid look of wonder, and which was received by Mrs. Glossop with repeated starts and exclamations of mingled amazement and dismay. No sooner was the story concluded than she left the arm-chair to its fate, and hastened to the parlour to communicate the mysterious tidings. To her infinite disappointment, her master was so far from participating in her terror and perplexity, that he expressed with a contemptuous sneer his total disbelief of the occurrence.

“Tush! woman; simpleton, to listen to

these fooleries. The fellow was drunk or asleep, most likely both, dreaming ; perhaps saw a Will-o'-the-wisp—like enough ; several marshy bits, you know, at Blackhurst Bottom. Monks and missionaries indeed ! Stuff and nonsense ! don't tell me. I've given Master Chubbs credit for nearly two years' rent, but can't give him credit for this idle nonsense, and so you may tell him from me. I want more money and fewer lies. There I had him. Ha ! ha ! ”

On her way back to the hall the disconcerted housekeeper met Trotman, who passed her with a rather more significant look than usual, but without uttering a word, and proceeded to the parlour, upon the table of which he deposited a handsome gold watch set round with brilliants.

“ What's the meaning of this ? ” demanded Brown in a tone of surprise.

“ Chubbs found it in turnips. ”

“ What turnips ? ”

“ Two bundles at bottom of cart, unsold. ”

“ When did he find it ? ”

“ Just now. ”

“But whose is it? Whence does it come?”

“Dropped by Monk—suppose.”

“All he knows about it, then, is, that it was not among the unsold turnips when he left Cheltenham; and that, consequently, it must have been dropped, either purposely or accidentally, by the fellow whom he calls the monk.” John nodded assent eagerly, as if glad to be spared any further cross-questioning.

“Adzooks!” pursued the merchant, “there’s no Will-o’-the-wisp in this—no dream, at all events; capital gold watch, gold chain and seals,—arms engraved at the back. Why, then, the fellow must have had somebody in his cart after all. Do you think the stranger dropped it?”

“Who else? Don’t rain gold watches.”

“No more it does, no more it does: a very just and sensible remark, John. But what does Chubbs wish me to do with it? I should like to speak with him.”

“Driving off,” said the servant, pointing with his thumb in the direction of the sound made by the wheels of the cart.

"Hilloa, you sir ! Hilloa, John Chubbs !" cried the merchant, throwing open a window that looked upon the front garden ; " what am I to do with this gold watch ? "

" Keep it, Squire, if you please, till you can find out the Monk. I won't have a-nothink to do with it ; sure as a gun it'll bring trouble with it ; it may be a gunpowder-plot affair : so I'll leave it in your hands. "

" Vastly considerate, truly : well, come up in the morning ; I want to have a long talk with you about this strange story. But, I say, John Chubbs, were you drunk or asleep when your queer friend jumped into the cart ? "

" Why, Squire, I do reckon I wasn't quite neither one nor t'other, but betwixt and betweenish, as a man may say. "

" Ah ! I thought so : however, come and tell me all about it to-morrøw morning. But, I say, John Chubbs, how was the fellow, old or young ? "

" A bald-headed old chap to look at, Squire, but a young 'un to run away. "

" And what sort of a face ? "

" Why, I warn't a-minded much to mark

his face like, 'cause it were dark ; but when he were a looking up at the sky, and there came a flash o' lightning, I thuft I see a scar across the left side of his cheek, across the jowl like, but it might ha' been a smear o' dirt ; so I won't swear to a-nothing."

" Well, well, I can't stand chattering any longer at this cold window. Come to me in the morning. Good night !"

Chubbs drove home, and would have received, as he richly deserved, a severe scolding from his wife for the shameful waste of his market money, had she not been so apprehensive of his rheumatism, and so busy in changing his wet garments for others which she had hung to the fire long before his return, and then so much bustled in preparing his supper and listening to his strange adventure, that his tippling misdemeanors and his loss of a whole day quite slipped out of her head. Brown, in the meanwhile, had minutely examined the gold watch, and looked at the maker's name, and counted the number of diamonds and estimated the value of the whole, and was

deeply interested in endeavouring to trace its owner by comparing the arms with those in a book of heraldry, when the clock struck ten, from which established hour of retiring to rest he never suffered any occupation to divert him. As a general rule, the same methodical arrangement extended to the household; but adventures were too rare at the Manor-House to allow a hurried discussion of the recent singular occurrence, which was canvassed by the servants with closed doors, when an infinity of conjectures were broached in vain endeavours to solve the enigma, until the clock had sounded midnight, upon which significant hint they withdrew to their beds in no small bewilderment of spirit.

Short as it had been, the colloquy with Chubbs entailed very unpleasant consequences upon Brown, the chilly night-air having brought on a sharp attack of toothache which prevented his sleeping. Tired of tossing about in his bed, and of reproaching himself for having been such a fool, at his time of life, as to stand chattering at an

open window, he at length got up, dressed himself, and, in the mere restlessness of pain and feverish impatience, resolved to walk round the garden. The sun had not yet risen, but the glimmering flush stealing up the eastern sky had already quenched the stars in that direction, although others in the opposite quarter were still brightly twinkling, as if they bravely resolved to arrest the retreat of night, and to struggle to the very last moment with the advancing god of day. From the effect of the recent storm, the air was unusually pellucid, while the lateness of the season rendered it crisp and bracing. So calm was the dawn, that the leaves, heavily as they were laden with dew, scarcely let fall a drop, unless where the quick walk of the pedestrian, whose progress partook of his mental petulance, occasioned a passing vibration in the air. The last vagrant bat had flitted to the thick ivy of the ruined pigeon-house; the tenants of the rookery had not yet quitted their nests; not a sound was heard, except the occasional faint chirp of a hedge-bird

twittering in its dreams ; and the clarion of an early cock, who seemed to be crowing with more than ordinary triumph, as if exulting that he had the world of sound all to himself. His exclusive possession, however, was not of long continuance, for a solitary lark, who had mounted to a height that gave him a glimpse of the uprising sun, though it was still invisible below, proclaimed the tidings with as much rapturous eagerness as the mast-head sailor-boy shouts his glad discovery when he first sees land.

Brown, who had no taste in his present mood, nor, indeed, at any time, for the observation of natural beauties, hurried on to the postern at the back of the garden, and, mounting upon a stone, gazed vacantly over it. Not an object moved in the fields outspread before him ;—a few of the daisies were indeed beginning to wink, as if peeping out for the first intimation of the sun, but the crimson eyelashes of the majority were still closed in slumber ; not a single tiny pearl of dew had fallen from the cobweb threads

with which the fern and the tall blades of grass were festooned ; the wild flowers under the hedge were still dim and indistinct, and among them a solitary poppy with its drooping head looked like a military sentinel slumbering on his post ; the sleeping cows, imbedded in the glittering sward, might have been taken for figures of cattle painted on a silver ground ; the motionless and shadowless trees, with their glistening foliage, wore an artificial look ; and had it not been for the mysterious tinkling of a little unseen rill, which had been all night long humming its gentle lullaby to the nodding hedge-flowers, the whole landscape might have been thought dead or unreal.

“Sha’n’t find a cure for the tooth-ache by staring at daisies and dandelions,” soliloquised Brown in a moody tone ; “catch nothing but a cold by getting up so early,—ugh ! If I send for old purblind Dawson, ten to one but he tugs out the wrong tooth. In Smyrna, now, there was an Armenian dentist lived in the next street,—clever chap that,—would whip out every

tooth in your head afore you could say Jack Robinson."

In this unenviable frame of mind and body he pursued his walk, skirting the enclosure of the garden and drive, and had just emerged from a clump of trees, when, on raising his eyes from the ground, he beheld, looking fixedly through the great iron gate of entrance, a figure exactly resembling the monk as described by Chubbs. There was the bald head, the deeply furrowed face, the grizzled beard, the long black robe, the pendent rosary and crucifix—everything that had been so minutely portrayed. Though neither a timid nor a superstitious man, the merchant was so far daunted by this unexpected vision, that he stood still for a minute, during which the stranger scrutinized him with marked attention, and then hurried out of sight, though his footsteps were still heard as if he was running along the outside of the wall. Re-assured as quickly as he had been disconcerted, Brown, determined, if possible, to penetrate the mystery, called out to him to stop, at

the same time hastening forward with the intention of pursuing him; but the gate was locked, the key was in the house, and there was no time to seek it; so he ran to the ruined pigeon-house, climbed half-way up, and looking over the wall discovered the object of his search cowering down, as if to conceal himself, behind one of the heavy stone buttresses. "Holloa, you sir!" he shouted aloud; "who are you?—what are you?—what do you want here? Have you lost a gold watch?"

Instead of replying to these questions, the monk started in apparent alarm from his retreat, and rushing at full speed across the fields, plunged into the shaws and thickets with which the country was tangled, in that direction, to a considerable distance. "Ah! no chance of nabbing the fellow now," growled Brown; "if I were to scamper after him, I should only get lost, like the babes in the wood, in yonder confounded maze of bushes, and briars, and trees, and criss-cross lanes. No shops there to inquire at; no names written up at the

corners of the footpaths, no passengers to tell you the way. No use speaking to hips and haws, sloes and blackberries: don't know the way themselves, and if they did wouldn't tell you. Hope some naughty little boy with ragged teeth and a bad breath will eat 'em all up for their pains. Ugh! there goes the tooth again.—Curse it! what right has it to shoot? Hasn't taken out a licence!"

CHAPTER X.

HERE was a tale of mystery, upon which the gossips of Woodcote and its vicinity banqueted for a long time, exercising their ingenuity in devising its solution, but with no better success than had attended the similar conjectures of the servants at the Manor-House. Roger Crab, who had rather a narrow swallow for marvellous tales, conceiving it much more likely that men should lie or be deceived, than that prodigies should occur, suspected that Chubbs had been dreaming in the first instance, and that the relation of the supposed monk and his freaks had conjured up a similar sleeping or waking phantom in the mind of Brown: a theory, however, which found few or no supporters; for there is a fondness for the wonderful, and a pleasure in guessing at a puzzle, of which

neither men nor women like to be deprived. The gold watch, it was urged, and there was great validity in the plea, was neither a nightmare nor a spectral illusion, but "a palpable hit, egad!" a most unequivocal and valuable timepiece, which seemed to have done duty in some family of respectability. Advertisements were inserted in the Cheltenham papers; but, as no claimant appeared, it remained locked up in Brown's desk; furnishing abundant materials for surmise, but no clue for the discovery of its owner.

At a dinner-party at the Manor-House, consisting of the usual guests, for the neighbourhood supplied but little variety, this inexhaustible subject had engrossed the tongues and the attention of the company for some time, when Roger Crab, by way of turning the conversation, expressed his regret that Fanny Chubbs should look so ill and appear so unhappy.

"Poor girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Latimer, in a tone of deep feeling, "I pity her most sincerely; she seems to be quite pining away, and they do say it is all for love of Harry

Groombridge.—I think his father is quite inexcusable in withholding his consent to their marriage.”

“And I think just the contrary,” cried Brown: “the old miller is right, and acts like a sensible fellow and a good father. If Harry takes the daughter, he will probably have the whole family to maintain, for old Chubbs, thanks to his drunkenness, is going to the dogs as fast as he can. The miller has enough to do with his own children: if I were in his place, I should act just as he has done.”

“Ellen, my dear!” exclaimed Mrs. Latimer, addressing Molloy’s second daughter, “how pale you turn!—and now you are quite red again: don’t you feel well?”

“Not quite,” faltered Ellen; “I fear the fire has been rather too much for me.”

“Let me entreat you, then, to move instantly,” cried Walter, jumping up with an air of deep concern, and running round to offer his arm: “change places with me. How could I be so negligent as not to think of it sooner?”

"I can't imagine what's come to the girl lately," whispered the Captain: "she used to be able to stand fire or anything else. I remember when we were once dining with the Marquis——"

"I am quite well now," interposed Ellen, "and am very sorry that I have given so much trouble.—Pray let the conversation proceed."

"Don't you think, then," resumed Mrs. Latimer, addressing Brown, "that Harry, seeing how the poor girl takes on, may be tempted to marry without his father's consent?"

"If he does, Madam, he will be a very good-for-nothing chap. A fellow without a fair prospect of maintaining them, has no more right to set up a wife and eight children, than he has to drive a coach and eight horses."

"An equipage such as you describe," urged Mrs. Latimer, "would be preposterous in a poor man, not to say a wicked piece of extravagance; but a marriage where two people are mutually attached, is so natural."

"So are hunger, and thirst, and starvation,—exceedingly natural. But we are not living in a state of nature, Madam. If we were, we might marry as fast as we liked : no need of houses, clothes, or kitchen : live in a cave ; wear a coat of paint or train-oil, instead of broad-cloth ; eat carrion ; drink ditch-water ;—that's a natural marriage, Madam."

"My dear Mrs. Latimer," said Crab, "it is no use arguing with our friend upon this subject ; he is quite a Malthusian, you see."

"No such thing,—never read Malthus in my life,—not an anythingian, nor don't wish to be, except a common-sensian, and there I shall have the field all to myself, or nearly so. Ha, ha ! a home-thrust that for the whole world. Hope it likes it."

"But upon your system of celibacy for the poor," remonstrated Mrs. Latimer, "is there not a great chance of a wide-spread immorality ?"

"No, not half so much as there is from poor marriages, for these entail want, and distress, and temptation ; and where people

have no property of their own, there's no security for the property of their neighbours. Never hear of rich pickpockets,—never stopped on the high road by an alderman; never burked by a banker.”

“And yet it does seem rather hard upon the poor,” persisted Mrs. Latimer, “that, in addition to their other privations, they are to be debarred from the pleasure of marriage.”

“The pleasure, Madam! the fiddlestick! Rather say the wretchedness. What think you of ten children in a two-roomed cabin, five with the small-pox, five with the measles, all with the hooping-cough; what say to that, Madam, hey?”

“I say that you have no right to suppose such an extreme case. The young folks may be all in rude health.”

“Ay, ay, rude enough for that matter. Two of them beating little drums, two blowing penny trumpets, two driving hoops round the room, two making the dog bark, and the other two crying at the top of their voices because they have no drums, trum-

pets, hoops, or dog, to make a noise with. Pleasant for a sick mother, and a father with a racking headache !”

“ Now you have wandered to the opposite extreme,” smiled Mrs. Latimer : “ the children could not well be all young at once. Four of them, at least, would be grown up.”

“ Very true, Madam, very true : your two elder sons, after having nearly tormented you to death, and saddled you repeatedly with their debts, will have found their way to the Fleet and King’s Bench ; your two eldest girls will have run away with two scamps, whose families you will have to maintain ; and the six younger children will be all waiting to imitate the hopeful example of their seniors. However, all these enjoyments are lost to me : I am a poor devil of an old bachelor : I never married.”

“ How very clever he is ! so sensible—so argumentative, and so droll too !” said Matilda to Crab, in a whisper that was meant to be overheard. “ It’s quite instructive, as well as entertaining, to listen to him, isn’t it ?”

“ And as to the hardship of a single life,”

resumed Brown, "the poor are only called upon to practise the same restraint and discretion that are exercised by their superiors. Zooks, Madam! *I* never thought of hampering myself with a wife when I was a poor clerk, or running about the world as a supercargo:—not such an ass. Wiser still—haven't thought of it since."

"Heaven grant you may never feel the want of a wife, my dear sir!" ejaculated Mrs. Latimer.

"Amen!" responded the merchant. "Laughed fit to split, some time ago, at a comedy—forget the name—a bachelor was one of the characters—an old maid attacks him—parcel of useless fellows, says she—for my part I wonder government doesn't put a tax upon bachelorship.—Really so do I, cries the cunning old fox, rubbing his hands,—for it's quite a luxury.—There he had her—gave her a Rowland for her Oliver—Don't you think so?—Ha! ha!"

"But you would not object to a marriage where there's money on one side?" said Matilda.

"Certainly not; the parties then are no longer a poor couple."

"Very true, very true," was the reply; and then, turning to Crab, she continued in the same audible whisper as before, "What shrewdness, what sagacity in everything he says! Don't you find him a very superior man?"

"I do," was replied *sotto voce*; "so much so, that I would not, if I were you, throw away any flattery upon him. You may whisper lower, too, and still be heard, for his ears are sharp."

"La! Mr. Crab, how can you be so rude? I never flattered you, at all events."

"Alas! I have no young heir."

"By the powers!" cried Molloy, coming to the support of his daughter, "Tilda is perfectly right; money on one side is quite sufficient, and if the other happens to be of an ancient, honourable, and distinguished family, sure they meet upon equal terms. By the bye, neighbour Brown, did I ever explain to you the different quarterings and bearings upon our coat

of arms ? We claim a very great descent, you know."

"There can be no doubt of it, none in the world," gravely replied Crab. "When I was at Brussels, I remember to have seen an old painting of Noah entering the Ark with a box under his arm, on which was inscribed 'Papers of the Molloy family.' These were doubtless your ancestors."

"Capital! capital!" laughed Molloy; "I didn't know you were a wag. What has given you such a turn for fiction?"

"Sympathy! sympathy! Have you never noticed it before, when I have been chatting with you?"

As our penetrating readers, a class which includes every individual of the fair sex, will doubtless have suspected that there was good cause for the depressed spirits and occasional deep emotion of Ellen Molloy, we feel that we ought not any longer to delay an explanation as to the state of her affections, as well as those of the twin brothers. Excluded as were the two families from other associates of their own age;

residing within sight of each other's dwellings; and mutually attracted by a congeniality in tastes, pursuits, and amusements, it was hardly to be expected that their intercourse could be continued, and it had now endured for some time, without an ultimate engagement of their affections. This tendency on the part of Ellen and the twins had been so gradual, as to be at first imperceptible even to themselves. They had played together in their younger days, and, when they attained maturity, their pastimes were succeeded by pursuits and recreations which rather tended to cement than loosen the pleasant bonds of their previous intimacy. It has been already stated that the brothers were passionately devoted to music, in which they were both well skilled, although their talent in this, as in several other respects, assumed a distinctive character. As Molloy could not afford to pay for masters, he encouraged his young neighbours to cross the common and give instructions, as often as it suited them, to his daughters; and the latter would

often be invited by Mrs. Latimer to her cottage, that they might practise upon her piano, and sing with her sons, or take a lesson in drawing. Sometimes they made little excursions together in the neighbourhood for the purpose of sketching or of visiting any of the views or remarkable objects which were within walking distance, or could be reached with the assistance of the fly, now rendered more extensively available by the vigour and activity of the new horse.

From the very commencement of their acquaintance a congeniality of disposition, a kindred affectionateness in their susceptible hearts, had made close and almost inseparable companions of Ellen and Walter; an association which, unconsciously to both parties, had ripened into a deep attachment. As there are certain plants which push forth their shoots more vigorously under pressure and exclusion from the light, so had this mutual love appeared to develop itself the more actively from being kept suppressed and undivulged. When Ellen, however,

now no longer a girl, discovered the real state of her affections, it filled her with a sorrow and despondency only the more painful because she knew, by that mysterious freemasonry which invariably reveals lovers' secrets to each other, that her predilection was fully reciprocated.

At first, indeed, her heart had swelled with exultation when the thrilling tones and impassioned eyes of Walter disclosed what his lips had never attempted to reveal; but this was a momentary triumph, only giving an additional poignancy to her despondent feelings, when she reflected how completely all chances of their union were destroyed by their respective circumstances. Generous and high-minded as she was fond and gentle, Ellen consulted the interests of the man to whom she was attached, much more than her own wishes. She foresaw that an improvident marriage, while it must seriously compromise his prospects in life, would expose herself to an incessant struggle with poverty, and probably terminate in blighting the happiness of both. Narrow as were

Walter's present means of subsistence, they would be considerably reduced by the death of his mother, in an annuity upon whose life the twins had sunk the greater portion of their little fortunes; and as to herself, she was not only penniless, but likely to involve her husband, were she so indiscreet as to unite herself with a poor man, in all sorts of pecuniary difficulties.

Too well did she know her father's embarrassments, and his unscrupulous character, not to feel assured that he would entangle, and perhaps ultimately ruin, any one upon whom he could practise his arts and trickeries. His plausible manners, apparently so frank and undesigning, had already decoyed comparative strangers into his snares; how then were his machinations to be resisted by one so yielding and so unsuspecting as Walter? No one could marry her without being plunged into debts and troubles—without becoming liable, in fact, for the support of the whole family (if he suffered himself to be thus victimised), or quarrelling with her father, if he refused. Although

a long exposure to the attacks of duns, and the mortifications of poverty, had steeled the Captain against their assaults, Ellen was not so callous; the constant humiliations and occasional insults to which they were subjected wounded her honest pride, while they weighed heavily upon her heart; and she would have deemed it a most ungenerous, not to say unprincipled act, to implicate the man she loved in similar degradations and anxieties. Such were the considerations that determined her, as soon as she had discovered the real state of her affections, to control and conquer her unfortunate passion, at whatever sacrifice; such were the causes of the deep depression of spirits, the long fits of silence, and the pallid looks of languor to which, in our previous pages, we have made slight and unexplained allusion.

Under the influence of the circumstances we have already detailed, it is almost superfluous to state that Walter's youthful predilection for Ellen had been gradually fostered into an attachment as ardent as her

own, although the prospective impediments to their union, which were as glaringly manifest to his eyes as to hers, had placed a seal of secrecy and silence upon his lips. While their intimacy remained undiminished he was too happy, indeed, to yearn for any change in their relative positions; it afforded him an enjoyment, a delight which he would almost have feared to risk by a declaration, even had there been a prospect of a happy issue to his suit. His was the arm that she invariably took in all their excursions; to him was it that she always applied for lessons in music or drawing; he was the tuner of her guitar; with him it was that she sang duets, or compared notes as to the new books they had been reading; and to him it was that she ran for assistance when any little mechanical job was to be executed at the cottage, for which she sometimes contrived to make pretexts with all the ingenuity of love. A garden seat was broken by an intentional accident, or an espalier dissevered, or the trellis-work damaged, that his amateur carpentry might be put in

requisition ; and when he was thus occupied, her father, glad to avail himself of gratuitous services, generally set him other tasks, of which he was never weary, since they afforded him opportunities of prolonged communication with Ellen.

When the latter, however, had determined to struggle with an attachment which she felt to be hopeless, though she knew it to be reciprocated, a sudden, and, to Walter, an inexplicable and most painful alteration occurred in her deportment. Shunning him as studiously as she had previously courted his society ; assuming, when they were forced to meet, a coldness and reserve equally foreign and distressing to her heart ; converting her lately beaming smiles into an expression of indifference, and compelling her lips to assume the tone and language of formal civility, she sought to stifle his unlucky passion, and check her own, by transferring to Allan, in the most pointed manner, all those little attentions and fascinating marks of preference which she had hitherto lavished upon his brother. Walter's

own heart, and a close observation of Ellen's manners, which bore evident marks of a painful constraint, having revealed to him the real motive of this apparent estrangement, he never reproached her, however deeply he might regret it; never felt a moment's jealousy of Allan, to whom indeed he was hardly less fondly attached than to Ellen.

Allan, however, who looked upon this alteration as a voluntary and marked expression of her regards to himself—a preference the more flattering because it had been perfectly unsolicited on his part—thought that he might fairly welcome his good fortune, and conciliate the favour which he found her so willing to bestow. His temperament was naturally susceptible, his feelings impetuous, and the poor youth was deeply involved in a love which he fondly imagined to be reciprocal, very shortly after Ellen had adopted that new line of conduct which he had misconstrued into a direct encouragement.

In this explanation we have made no al-

lusion to Matilda, the eldest sister, because she was not implicated in the game of cross-purposes with which Cupid, indulging in the well-known malice of his disposition, was amusing himself at Woodcote. Several years the senior of her sister, in whose education she had assisted, she still looked upon her as a child—still retained that air of superiority which teachers of either sex find it so difficult to resign, even when conversing with those who have not been their pupils. The twins, too, were her juniors, and too poor, moreover, to be deemed worthy her attention, for she thought highly of her charms, though they were no longer in their first bloom, and had experienced such daily and bitter proofs of the annoyances arising from narrow circumstances, that she had not the least wish to extend their sufferings into her married life. In fact she had set her heart upon a Nabob residing at Cheltenham, and looked forward with delight to her father's occasional visits to that place, as affording the most probable chance for the realisation of her ambitious hopes.

Such had been the state of affairs when Brown took possession of the Manor-House, —an occurrence which quickly operated a marked change in the views and hopes both of the Latimers and the Molloyes. The merchant, who was known to be wealthy and childless, had no sooner proclaimed his friendship for the former family by the handsome donations he had made, than visions of his future favour, and its probable consequences, sprang up on all sides, even the despondent Ellen deeming it not improbable that, as he had once offered to procure a situation for Walter, he might be induced to provide for him in some way, or to make him such an allowance as would authorise him to marry. Hence her deep emotion when she had heard the old gentleman make a declaration in favour of primogeniture, which threatened to exclude Walter from his future bounty, and her similar distress at the bitterness with which he inveighed against all marriages where the parties had not a fair and reasonable prospect of maintaining a family.

But the most signal change effected by

Brown's anticipated intentions was manifested in her sister Matilda, whose supercilious indifference towards Allan Latimer was suddenly succeeded by the most forward and pointed advances. Mrs. Latimer's son, with his pitiful income and worse prospects—an unequivocal *detrimental*—was very well by way of amusement, and as a *dernier ressort*, in the country. As the merchant's heir, however, he presented himself to her calculating mind in a totally different light. His youth was now a recommendation rather than an objection; the Cheltenham Nabob was forgotten; and in the determination to captivate the future proprietor of the Manor-House, she spared no artifice, and hesitated at no lure that might decoy him into her snares. She was even indelicate enough to communicate her intentions to her father, whose co-operation she felt to be necessary; and that unscrupulous personage, warmly approving her schemes, and looking upon Allan as a raw, inexperienced young man, expressed a perfect confidence that by their joint machinations they would very shortly

wheel and cajole or hamper and entangle him beyond all possibility of extrication.

How Brown's housekeeper had been employed in the mean time, and what were her impressions as to the recent occurrences at Woodcote, will be best explained by the following

Letter from Mrs. Glossop to Mrs. Jellicoe.

"*Ma share* Mrs. Jellicoe,

"I am very glad to find by your letter that you are going to learn French, seeing the great advantages that I have derived from it, especially from picking it up by the ear; but as to your being assisted by Mrs. Gribble, that's all stuff and nonsense. You say that she has been to the Continent, but we went further—we proceeded to Geneva, where we saw the real *montagne Russe*, not the Brummagem ones in the Tivoli Gardens.

"Well, *ma share*, here we are settled at last, after so much bustling and racketing with carpenters, and upholsterers, and men of all sorts, that my poor head was almost

in a perpetual *tate-a-tate*. The bed-rooms are now completely furnished: I have got a new store-closet fitted up in my house-keeper's room, and if it wasn't that my chimney smokes a little when it makes *mauvay tong*, I should say that the whole house was quite a *bo ideal*. The garden, too, in the summer will be full of *agrimongs*, and the *coo dool* very *jolly*, for the little stream that used formerly to supply the fish-ponds is turned into a limping brook, which goes philandering round the grounds, so that you can't walk twenty yards without having to cross a little wooden bridge, which I think a very troublesome *fasson de parlay*.

"Master has begun giving dinners, and I am proud to say that we have done more than *notre possible*, and that everything was quite *come il fo*, spite of Sir Gregory's man-cook, who laughed one day at our having so few *casseroles* and no hot plate, and ridiculed our *pot-o-foo*; but I soon let him see that we had a very good *battery de quizzing*, and gave him as good as he brought. You know

that my master is particular stubborn in all his old-fashioned ways and *a la mode* habits; his laws, when they are once laid down, being as incombustible as those of the ancient Swedes and Prussians—*tong pea* !

“And now, *ma share*, *ecoutay voo*, for I have the strangest adventure to relate that you ever heard. John Chubbs, a farmer of this place, was returning from Cheltenham in his white market-cart (the French call it a *carte blanche*), when a large live horrid monk jumped smack into it, without ever saying *meal pardon*, as they always do in France when they are guilty of any such gross act of *espieglerie*. He wore a black robe with a scowl, a hosiery of beads, and a crucifix hanging from his girdle, and declared to Chubbs (*shay voo*) that he was a manumissionary from Rome, come over to convert us all to Popery, with all its *shevoo de frise* of particular confession, and the washup of dirty saints with holy water. *Mon doo, ma share*, did you ever hear of anything so awfully *nonchalong* ?

“Mr. Crab, a friend of master’s, says he

agrees with one Mr. Horace Walpole, 'who said that what he objected to was the fasts and the miracles of the Catholics;—they give me, says he, too little to eat, and too much to swallow. The story made a laugh at our dinner-table as if it was a *bonbon*, but I can't say I see any *come say droll*, nor any great *pour rire* in it, do you? Mr. Crab declares the Pope will send over a bull to gore us all into the pale of the Catholic Church, and he talked of our being tossed on the horns of a dilemmer, or some such horrid animal; only think how dreadfully *degagay*! I do hope they'll put his nasty bull in the pound, or cut its throat with a *coo de grass*. At other times Mr. Crab laughs at the monk story; and when master was carving the leg of mutton t'other day, he recommended him to cut out the Pope's eye, as he couldn't then see what he was about. For my part, I think it no laughing matter—I'm fairly frightened out of my *amour propre*. In short, *ma share*, I am living in a constant state of *epouvantable*, especially at night, when I am kept

awake by the cats, who come to make *lay lose yew* under my window, and there they keep caterwauling as if for a wager—quite *a key mew mew*, as the French say. But I must really *mettre fang* to this terrible long letter, and so for the *momong* I subscribe myself, *ma share* Mrs. Jellicoe,

“*Toojoor a voo,*

“MARY GLOSSOP.”

CHAPTER XI.

WOMEN may be mistaken as to the motives, feelings, and affections of men, but the sympathy of sex gives them a more penetrating insight into the heart of females. Timid and bashful as was the character of Ellen Molloy, and more particularly guarded as had been her recent deportment towards Walter Latimer, the secret of her affection for him had been long since discovered by Matilda, who, treating it as a mere girlish flirtation, did not condescend to notice it. But when Ellen, in the vain hope of masking the real state of her heart, avoided Walter as much as possible, and transferred her attentions to Allan, her sister looked upon it as a most unwarrantable interference with her own "vested rights,"—a treachery the

more base because it occurred at the precise juncture when Brown's intention of making Allan his heir was strongly suspected, if not fully established. Judging of her sister by herself, she did not doubt that the hope of inveigling the future proprietor of the Manor-House had been the sole and most unworthy motive of the late alteration in her conduct. So sudden a substitution of one brother for another was ungenerous to Walter, most mercenary as regarded Allan, insulting to herself. The very thought of being thus supplanted was intolerable; but though she had hitherto exercised an absolute authority over her sister, whose amiability had always prompted her to yield rather than contend, Matilda was too haughty even to command her withdrawal from the field. No; she would inflict a more pointed and severe chastisement—she would triumphantly bear off the prize in the very face of her rival.

A scheming brain and not very scrupulous delicacy soon created opportunities for forwarding this design. All of a sudden

she was smitten with the rage of sketching from nature, of taking lessons on the piano-forte, and of resuming her harp, which had long been resigned to its green-baize cover, on account of the inconvenient expense attending the replacement of the broken strings,—in all which pursuits Allan was invited to be her teacher and assistant. By this arrangement she had a constant excuse for dropping in at Mrs. Latimer's cottage, or for asking Allan to come over and tune her harp, which she contrived to keep in frequent need of his aid and adjustment. The billets despatched across the common, either by Carlos the page or by Valentine, were always couched in the most flattering terms imaginable ; but these epistolary compliments, however fulsome, were poor indeed compared to the full battery of blandishments brought to bear upon him in their personal interviews, which she always managed to appoint when Ellen was absent, and her father purposely out of the way. Running out to meet him upon one of these occasions, as he opened the gate of the little front garden,

she exclaimed, with her most winning smile of welcome, and an assumed flutter of delight—"How very kind of you to come across so quickly ! you are always so good-tempered, so obliging—no wonder that every one speaks so highly of you, that every one is delighted to see you, that every one loves you as well as——Dear me ! what am I saying ? how my foolish tongue runs away with me !—but really when first I catch sight of you I am so confused, so overjoyed—I mean so thoughtless—that I hardly know what I am talking about."

"How can I hesitate to obey your summons," said Allan, "when you always give me so cordial and so flattering a reception ? But is not your politeness exposing you to the risk of catching cold ? The air is sharp, and you have neither bonnet nor shawl."

"True, true—how could I be so silly ? The sight of you put everything out of my head. Come, we will hasten into the house." So saying, she proffered her arm, and, pressing close to his side, with an affected shudder at the cold, hurried him across the

garden. "You will be tired to death of me and my messages," she continued as they entered the parlour; "but I really cannot tune this tiresome harp; indeed I can do nothing now—I am grown quite stupid."

"I would not hear thine enemy say so," quoted Allan with a polite bow.

"Wouldn't you—wouldn't you indeed? How delighted I am to hear you say so! Not that I am aware of having an enemy in the world—it would distress me to think that I had, for mine is a heart formed for love rather than hatred. It is a great misfortune to be too susceptible. With such a disposition one cannot be long happy—Heigho!"

"But your spirits are generally very good, are they not?"

"They used to be," replied Matilda, suddenly bending upon the ground the eyes which had previously been fixed upon his with an expression of great tenderness; "but latterly I have lost all my cheerfulness, all my enjoyment of society—except when ——" Here she paused, attempted to blush

and look confused ; and then, starting from her seat, continued, "Come, come, I am in very good spirits *now*, so let us have a good long practice. Do you find many of the strings out of tune?"

"Only two," replied Allan, trying and according them.

"What an exquisite ear you have ! But so it is in everything—the same fine organization, the same genius, renders you a proficient in all your pursuits."

"Nay, you will make me vain, and so spoil all my superfine qualities," laughed Allan, "if you pay me so many compliments. But I know that I don't deserve them, and so I won't allow them to turn my head. There ! your harp is now in perfect order, and the master (as bad a one, I fear, as most of the unprofessionals) longs to hear his pupil."

It happened, by mere accident,—an accident, however, which always recurred upon these occasions,—that Matilda, although it was morning, had arrayed herself in a dress with short sleeves—a casualty which will

occur now and then to young ladies whose fair arms retain their plumpness, while their other charms have begun to lose some small portion of their vernal bloom. Having arranged herself in her most becoming and attractive attitude, the harpist began to ply her hands and arms to the best advantage,—an object to which she seemed to attach greater importance than to the accuracy of her performance. It was soon found that the trimming of her sleeves interfered with the strings, and Allan was requested to tuck it up,—an office which he could not perform—it was not meant that he should—without complimenting her on the fairness of her skin and the pretty dimples in her elbow. The player was doomed to be incommoded on that unlucky morning, for shortly afterwards her comb came out, and her hair, of which she was justly proud, fell about her throat and shoulders in very picturesque profusion.

“Do help me, Allan,” cried the distressed damsel, trying in vain to gather up her scattered locks; “you are clever and handy at everything, so pray be my *coiffeur* for

once and a way, and assist me to recover the truant honours of my head."

"Honours, indeed! tresses worthy of Berenice," said Allan, endeavouring to obey her commands, but with so little success, that she petulantly exclaimed, "I had no idea you could be awkward in anything. Away with you! I can manage it better myself. Thanks, nevertheless, for your good intentions." With which words she tenderly pressed his hands in her own, and gently removed them from her ringlets. Hasty as was the new arrangement she gave to them, it was not without a view to effect, an object in which she proved so successful that Allan pronounced the change to be a decided improvement.

From the long intimacy that had subsisted between the families, from Allan's unsuspecting nature and ignorance of the world, and more especially from the pre-occupation of his thoughts and affections, he attached no particular design to these enticements, further than to contrast the bold forwardness of one sister with the

modest and guarded demeanour of the other, —a comparison which increased his dislike of Matilda and his admiration of Ellen. This effect not having escaped the penetration of the Captain, who had prompted many of his daughter's machinations, and was deeply interested in their success, he determined to ensnare his prey, if possible, by giving him clearly to understand that he had won her affections, and thus appealing to his generosity or compassion,—a device in which Matilda did not scruple to become his confederate. Having, with some trouble, forced a ring upon her finger, she solicited the assistance of Allan, on his next visit, to withdraw it, declaring that she and her father had been making repeated but unsuccessful attempts to get it off: Here was an opportunity for coquetry, and inveigling arts, and affected complaints of being hurt, and cries of pretended pain, and fond looks from languishing eyes, none of which were neglected; but the crowning effect was reserved for the Captain, who exclaimed, when Allan had at length succeeded, “By

the powers! you're a clever fellow,—you have accomplished the job most famously; but if I know anything of 'Tilda's heart and affections, poor dear girl! she had ten thousand times rather you should put a ring upon her finger than take one off."

"Good Heavens, papa!" ejaculated Matilda, getting up her best extempore blush, and palpitating with an assumed confusion and agitation; "how could you ever! I declare I will never forgive you if you betray—if you divulge—Pray don't believe him, Allan. Really I feel so ashamed, so overcome, that I cannot look you in the face!" With these words she applied a handkerchief to her eyes, and sidled with a mincing step towards the door, which Allan opened for her, saying, as she passed, "Nay, nay, Matilda, you must forgive the Captain, for we all know that he will have his joke; he only talks this nonsense to tease you." This suggestion was a lucky impromptu on Allan's part; but it may be doubted whether Molloy would have acquiesced in his version of the affair, had not his mouth

been stopped by the sudden entrance of Crab, in whose presence he feared to practise machinations which, he well knew, would be instantly detected and unsparingly exposed.

Simple-hearted as he was, Allan now began to suspect that he had unwittingly and unintentionally won the affections of Matilda, and that her father, of whose principles he did not entertain a very exalted notion, was seeking an opportunity of entrapping him into a marriage. To discourage their joint hopes and avoid their snares, he declined all invitations and appointments, however tenderly worded might be the *billet doux* that came from Matilda, carefully restricting his visits and interviews to those occasions when the presence of other parties would secure him against a recurrence of recent blandishments, which he now began to consider as so many deliberate stratagems and plots. But Molloy, impelled by the double motive of procuring an advantageous settlement for his eldest daughter, and a prospective money-lender

for himself, resolved not to be easily baffled ; and as both cajolery and blandishments had failed, he determined to try the effect of intimidation. To justify this *dernier ressort* it was necessary to devise another scheme,—one that should excuse him in the eyes of the world for having recourse to extreme measures,—one which should place Allan in a dilemma from which he could not possibly escape except by marrying the daughter or fighting the father. In justice to Matilda it must be recorded that she positively refused at first to co-operate in a scheme which she found revolting to her feelings, unfastidious as they were ; and it was only after the repeated declarations of her father, to whom she was sincerely attached, that in love and war all stratagems were fair,—that the preservation of himself from a prison, and of his family from utter ruin, depended on the success of their enterprise,—it was only after reiterated statements of this nature, enforced by alternate commands and entreaties, that Matilda, justifying herself under the plea of filial obedience, suffered

her scruples and her repugnance to be overcome.

Brown had erected a summer-house in his grounds commanding a view of the adjacent country, to which Allan now resorted almost daily to complete a large water-colour drawing, intended when finished to be presented to the proprietor of the mansion. While thus occupied one morning, the door was opened, and Matilda walked in with her portfolio, giving a well-acted start and exclamation as she saw Allan, and protesting that, not having the least idea it was occupied, she had betaken herself to the summer-house for the sake of making a little pencil sketch for her album. Although somewhat disconcerted by her appearance, Allan could not do otherwise than place a chair, resign a portion of the table, and spread out the implements for her purpose, intending to retire as soon as he had completed these preliminary arrangements; but she detained him by inquiring whether he had heard that the mysterious monk had again been seen

prowling about the neighbourhood in the dark, and, as some said, actually skulking through the grounds of the Manor-House. Several similar attempts to retreat from the summer-house had been baffled by fresh inquiries about the same inscrutable stranger, and expressions of the horror she should feel were she ever to encounter him, when a sudden rustling was heard in the shrubs at the back of the building. Matilda uttered a faint cry of terror, ejaculated the words, "Good Heavens ! he is here !—Save me—save me !" and threw herself into Allan's arms ; contriving, as she did so, to shake her bonnet from her head, to let her hair fall about her ears, and to assume an appearance of the utmost alarm and confusion,—at which precise moment Captain Molloy threw open the door and walked into the little room. "Ho, by the powers ! it's here you are," he exclaimed, with a voice and look of displeasure and surprise ; "it's all very well—all very well ! I've long known you were deeply in love with one another : but, lookye, Master Allan ; there has been

no regular declaration and acceptance, and all that sort of thing,—none, at least, that I have heard of; and though I know dear Tilda to be as good and as discreet a girl as ever breathed, I can't allow these private meetings and clandestine assignations, and all this tender love-making in a retired summer-house. No, no; we must have it all straightforward and aboveboard."

"On my soul, Sir," exclaimed Allan, reddening with anger at these injurious charges, and endeavouring to get rid of the damsel, who, however, evinced no inclination to quit so very interesting an attitude—"On my soul, Sir, you are mistaken! there is not a shadow of ground for these accusations and suspicions; and you ought to know—nay, you must know—that I am incapable of the conduct you would impute to me. Our meeting was perfectly accidental. Miss Molloy came here to sketch—you see she has brought her portfolio and drawing materials."

"And does she usually sit in your lap, or rather recline in your arms, when she is thus occupied?"

"Your daughter, Sir," replied Allan, blushing,—for he felt that her situation must present an awkward appearance—"heard a rustling in the bushes : we had been talking of the mysterious monk ; she imagined that he was approaching, and, being overcome with alarm, she flew towards me for protection. Were she sufficiently recovered from her agitation, I am sure she would confirm every word of my statement."

"My dear papa !" sighed Matilda, whose voice and senses became suddenly restored at this critical moment—"you shall know the whole truth : there is not—there cannot be—the smallest occasion for longer concealment : indeed there is nothing whatever that either of us need be ashamed to avow. It was the fear of your approach that made me faint away ; for as you had not been acquainted with the attachment that has for some time subsisted, I foresaw that you would be angry (you know, dear papa, how passionate you are) at my thus meeting Allan."

"Nay, nay, 'Tilda ; if it's a mutual attach-

ment, I have nothing further to say : but Allan, my dear fellow, why did you not pop the question to me as well as to the girl? You need not have been afraid of me. There's not a young chap in all England that I should prefer for a son-in-law. So give me your hand,—”Tilda is ready enough to give you hers,—and let us say it's a bargain, and a settled affair.”

Almost breathless with astonishment, and hardly crediting the evidence of his senses, Allan drew back from the proffered hand ; deposited his charge, in spite of her returning helplessness, in a chair ; and exclaimed, with a voice and look that attested his utter bewilderment, “What strange mistake is all this? What is the meaning of this most singular——Do I hear, do I understand you rightly? Miss Molloy must be labouring under a delusion for which I am utterly unable to account, when she talks of our mutual attachment.”

“O Allan, dear Allan !” ejaculated Matilda in an impassioned tone; “you will not surely deny—you will not reject—you are

a man of honour—I throw myself upon your justice, your generosity, your manly feeling.”

“Do you hear that, sir?” demanded the father sternly: “do you see the poor girl’s distress, and have you the heart to hesitate for a single moment?”

“Remember that my fair fame is at stake,” resumed the daughter, who seemed anxious to prevent Allan from speaking. “Your marked attentions have been noticed by everybody,—this morning’s occurrence may get whispered abroad,—and I shall never again be able to hold up my head, unless—” The remainder of the sentence was lost by the application of a handkerchief to her eyes, and an apparent burst of irrepressible emotion.

Allan availed himself of the interval to address the Captain in a very decided and emphatic tone. “If both yourself and your daughter, Captain Molloy, are really labouring under this most erroneous impression, I can only say that I have done nothing whatever to occasion it. So far from my having

made any advances to Miss Molloy, I have, for some time past, studiously declined your invitations, and avoided meeting her. How we now met I have fully and truly explained to you. Nothing have I said or done that could in the most remote degree compromise her fair fame—never have I in any way sought to gain her affections ; and though I have hitherto cherished a proper regard for her as a neighbour, I have never for a single moment contemplated the idea of making her my wife.”

At this most explicit declaration the distressed damsel uttered a very well executed cry of mental anguish, again buried her face in her handkerchief, to conceal the absence of tears, and sobbed convulsively ; whereupon the father, seeing that nothing was to be expected from cajolery, resolved, as it had been preconcerted, to try the effect of intimidation. “ Harkye, sir ! ” he cried, advancing with a stern look : “ I am not a man to be bamboozled, and I tell you plainly that this shuffling manœuvre won’t serve your turn.”

“ Shuffling manœuvre ! ” exclaimed Allan,

indignantly ; “ that term may be more applicable to others than to me. I throw it back in your teeth.”

“ Faith, then, you’ll find no shuffling on my part ! Lookye, young man : you would hardly like me, I suspect, considering your expectations in that quarter, to report your conduct to Mr. Brown, which I shall do immediately unless——”

“ You are welcome to report it to him or any one. I have done nothing of which I have reason to be ashamed,—nothing that might not be publicly proclaimed to all the world.”

“ Oh, is it so, young gentleman ? Then, if you care not for exposure, you must prepare yourself for a different mode of treatment. Recollect that you have to deal with a soldier. I am Captain Charles Sullivan Molloy, of Clognakilty Castle, in the county Down, of one of the oldest and most distinguished families in Ireland, not a soul of whom was ever known to be insulted with impunity ; and if you don’t choose to give my daughter the satisfaction of a man of honour—*by*

the powers you must prepare to give myself the satisfaction of a gentleman."

"No, no; for Heaven's sake recall the word!" exclaimed Matilda in an apparent agony of terror. "The very thought is dreadful—you are a dead shot—no one has ever escaped your fatal aim. What would become of me, if——" She hesitated, as if the possible catastrophe thus conjured up were too horrible for words; but the allusion, instead of intimidating Allan, as it was intended, produced a contrary effect. He began to suspect that the whole scene was a conspiracy in which the father and daughter were confederates; he feared that his temper, naturally impetuous, might hurry him into some violence of speech or action which he would subsequently repent; and, making a vehement effort to suppress any such ebullition, he said, with a forced calmness of tone and manner, "Captain Molloy, I am young and inexperienced, but I am neither to be wheedled nor intimidated. On my soul do I again assure you that your conjectures are utterly groundless,—that your daughter is

the victim of some lamentable delusion,—that my demeanour towards her has been most guarded and irreproachable—facts of which I am confident you yourself will admit the truth when you have dispassionately reviewed my whole conduct, and have received such further explanations as I shall always be ready to give you. For the present I dare not prolong our conversation, lest I should hurt your feelings, and irritate my own beyond all power of control.” With these words he bowed courteously to the father and daughter, and hurried out of the summer-house.

In a state of perturbation and excitement that rendered him hardly conscious of his actions, poor Allan made his escape from the back gate of the premises, and walked rapidly across the fields, revolving in his mind the recent scene, while he endeavoured to take counsel of his own confused thoughts as to the course which it might be most prudent to adopt. So completely had he been taken by surprise in the summer-house, that he had been unable to think, much less to

deliberate, upon the best means of disabusing the Captain, if he were really deceived, or of defeating his scheme, if, as he strongly suspected, he were seeking to entrap him for Matilda. For a moment it had occurred to him that these objects might be attained by confessing his attachment to Ellen ; but the fear of exposing and humiliating Matilda in the presence of her father had put a seal upon his lips. The rapidity of his progress seeming to increase the confusion of his thoughts, he rejected one scheme after another as they suggested themselves, utterly unable to determine upon any feasible mode for extricating himself from his difficulties. Bewildered and fatigued, he sat down at length upon a stile, bordered by a tufted shaw of underwood, through which ran the brooklet that subsequently found its way to the gardens of the Manor-House. Over his head an ancient decayed oak threw out its cankered limbs, gnarled and knotted, and twisted into a thousand angular contractions, as if they were convulsed by the spasms of old age: it stood alone, seeming to have

survived or destroyed every other tree; and might well have typified the time and grief stricken Saturn, as he sat in forlorn solitude, after having devoured all his offspring. It was like a frowning and a shattered wreck thrown upon a smiling shore, for every other object was fresh, and young, and pleasant. Nature's invisible orchestra was making symphonious music; an unseen bird, and the concealed waters, attuned themselves to the breeze as it played upon the leaves of the rustling thicket; and Allan, whose exquisitely sensitive ear derived pleasure from every species of harmony, while his imagination was ever stimulated by the mysterious melodies of the fields, soon felt the soothing influence of the scene and sounds by which he was surrounded. His anger and his irritation were appeased, his faculties cleared, and after a quarter of an hour's calm deliberation he determined to seek Ellen, to make a full and frank declaration of his attachment, and if, as he fondly anticipated, he should obtain her consent, to proceed immediately to her father, and claim

his sanction to their union. Thus would he effectually disprove all his injurious suspicions,—thus would he completely exculpate himself from the charge of having practised upon the affections of Matilda,—thus would he remove all possible ground of difference or reproach. How far he might compromise himself and his prospects with Adam Brown by taking so important a step without his advice and concurrence he would not stop to inquire; immediate decision was urgent, or the Captain might anticipate him with his misrepresentations and his calumnies; he would see Ellen, disabuse and conciliate her father, and then hasten to the Manor-House to communicate what he had done, and solicit the consent of his friend to the marriage. With these resolutions he jumped from the stile, and walked rapidly onwards in the direction of the common.

CHAPTER XII.

THIS was doomed to be rather an eventful day in the usually monotonous records of Woodcote. A lad named Jem Harris, the same who may perhaps be remembered as having been stationed in the elm-tree that fronted the Green Man, to give notice of the Squire's first appearance, had recently been appointed to carry the cross-post letters to Charlton Abbots. Proud of the leathern case strapped over his shoulder, and duly remembering that he was the messenger of weal or woe, on whose speedy and straightforward footsteps might depend the fate of many a palpitating heart, he never loitered or lingered by the way, except to make a football, now and then, of a round pebble, which he would follow for some time

whithersoever his kick might send it—or to run up the banks, or down into the hollows, to gather flowers,—or to creep along under a hedge to have a good shy at a sparrow,—or to climb up a tree in which he might happen to discern an irresistible bird's nest. With these trifling exceptions, no lad in the world could be more expeditious and undeviating in his course, especially when he passed through a village, on which occasions, as if conscious of his new dignity, he stepped forward in double-quick time, and would hardly pause even to answer an inquiry or a salutation.

Envious of his promotion, his former playfellows of Woodcote were apt to pursue him with the old and very superfluous inquiry of “Who took Chubbs's cart for the Squire's carriage?”—generally keeping out of reach of his reply, for Jem was a sturdy lad, and had sometimes left his mark, by way of answer, on the faces of his questioners. Foremost among these petty persecutors was the incorrigible mischief-lover young Valentine, who was emboldened in

his malice by the knowledge of his own superior strength and prowess. A long practice, however, of throwing at birds had rendered Jem Harris an expert shot, and a stone by which he once transmitted a rejoinder to this tormentor inflicted so severe a blow upon his arm, that he was glad to run home, writhing with pain.

For this well-merited chastisement the young scapegrace vowed vengeance,—nor was he long in executing his threat. To save the angle of coming up to the bridge by the Green Man, Jem was accustomed to cross the brook lower down, at a ford made by some large stepping-stones. Recent heavy rains and the accumulated waters from the Cotswold Hills having considerably swollen the brook, the stepping-stones were no longer visible, and the ford would have been impassable, but that some of the villagers, for their own accommodation, had thrown a plank across the now brawling stream, securing it to the bank on either side. Just at the time when the young letter-carrier was in the habit of crossing,

Valentine loosened one end of the board, hiding himself in the bushes to await the result of his contrivance, the perfect success of which was doubly attested by a loud splash in the water, followed by his own shrill laugh and triumphant cry of "Crikey, what fun !"

A good ducking had been the full extent of his intended malice ; but it is generally difficult to foresee the end of a practical joke. Deeper and more rapid than he had anticipated, the stream carried off the immersed boy, whelming him for a moment from sight, when Valentine, frightened at the probable consequences of his own mischief, burst from his concealment and ran along the bank calling aloud for assistance. Walter Latimer, who happened to be returning homeward by the brook-side, heard the cry, and no sooner caught sight of the struggling boy than he plunged into the stream to save him,—an act of less easy accomplishment, even to a good swimmer, than it might have seemed, for the waters in this precise spot spread out to some width,

and whirled round in occasional eddies difficult to resist; while the clinging boy, impeding the action of ~~his~~ limbs, threatened to drag them both to the bottom. At this alarming sight a new terror took possession of Valentine, who rushed back towards the bridge, screaming "Help! help! Mr. Walter will be drowned!"

Fortunately his alarm proved groundless; the boy and his rescuer reached the shore in perfect safety, though not without some little difficulty; but the rumour of the accident, gathering a darker character as it travelled, lasted much longer than the danger. The laundress, who lived close to the ford, told the baker that Jem Harris had been drowned, and Mr. Walter had been dragged out of the brook in a state of insensibility; the baker informed the butcher's wife that both had been drowned; the butcher's wife affirmed that the laundress had seen Mr. Walter carried home on a shutter quite dead: and thus the story travelled through the village, while Walter, who had hurried home for the purpose, was

hastily changing his clothes, that he might, by presenting himself to his mother and Allan, who were gone to visit a poor cottager in the neighbourhood, disprove any exaggerated and alarming accounts of the accident. In the mean while, Carlos, the page, having picked up the worst version of the affair, ran back to his master's cottage, and, seeing Ellen in the front garden, blurted out the frightful story exactly as he had heard it.

Its effect upon the poor pining love-sick girl, whose nerves were little able to sustain so violent a shock, was almost maddening. Without staying to question her informant, without uttering a single word, she rushed screaming across the common, her hair floating upon the wind, her eyes starting from their sockets, her bosom vehemently heaving, and her face distorted with all the ghastliness of terror. Just as she reached Mrs. Latimer's garden, the gate of which was open, Walter emerged from the door of the cottage, when, with a shriek of joy and a burst of uncontrollable emotion, she bounded

forward, threw her arms around his neck, and fainted away. Not less frightened than surprised at so startling an occurrence, Walter carried her into the parlour, and laid her upon the sofa, utterly at a loss to know what measures to adopt for her recovery, beyond throwing open the window and chafing her hands; his agitation and alarm every moment increasing, when he saw that she exhibited no signs of returning animation. In great perturbation of spirit he ran to seek the maid, and, not immediately finding her, hurried back to the parlour, by which time the effect of the air had revived the sufferer, who opened her eyes with a deep-drawn sigh, and, tenderly pressing the hand which had again been placed in her own, murmured in a low but eager whisper, "Are you indeed safe? are you quite, quite sure that you are unhurt?—Dear, dear Walter! they told me you had fallen—that you had been—that you were drowned!"

"Dearest Ellen! compose yourself, I entreat you. There is not the smallest cause

for this fearful agitation ; I have not received the least injury."

"Thank God ! thank God !" ejaculated Ellen, clasping her hands passionately together, and sinking down upon her knees beside the sofa, though she could hardly sustain herself, so vehemently did her whole frame tremble. "My brain seemed on fire when they told me—I should never, never have been able to survive your loss—I should never—Good Heavens ! what am I saying?—where am I?—how came I hither?—let me return home—What—Oh, what will you think of me?" A burning blush suffused her features, she burst into an hysterical passion of tears, and buried her face in her hands, overwhelmed with shame and confusion.

"What shall I think of you?" cried Walter, again lifting her up, and pressing her to his heart as he did so. "Think that I shall never be sufficiently grateful for this deep, this delightful, this soul-thrilling interest in my safety—an interest which emboldens me—Pardon me, dearest Ellen, for

seizing this moment of your distress to say so, but I cannot any longer conceal the secret of my bosom ; I love you—have ever loved you—fondly, passionately, uncontrollably. Surely, surely, dear Ellen, you will not make me the most miserable of men by—No, no, you cannot—you will fill my heart with joy, with transport, with ecstasy, by receiving my plighted troth—my solemn vow of unalterable constancy and attachment.”

A convulsive sob and a fresh burst of tears being the only response to this impassioned appeal, Walter again pressed her to his heart, softly whispering, “Will you not speak to me, dear Ellen? will you not give me a single word of hope?” Too timid and bashful to look her lover in the face, the poor girl dropped her head upon his bosom, murmuring, in an almost inaudible tone, “Dear Walter! it is of no use—it is too late now for concealment—I have betrayed my secret. My heart, my whole heart is yours!” Another fond embrace testified the exulting delight of her companion, who

poured forth his grateful feelings in that strain of fervent and spontaneous eloquence which none but a happy lover can command, thus affording time to Ellen, as her ear drank in the delicious music of his vows, to recover some portion of her self-possession.

Though yet unable to raise her eyes, her deep emotions at length found a voice : it seemed as if her heart, so long oppressed by the secret pent within it, rejoiced to pour it freely forth, and she confessed the whole history of her attachment, her vain efforts to restrain it, as well as the motives of her apparent estrangement from himself and recent attentions to his brother, with an unreserve and fulness that evinced the pleasure she took in the relation, even of her own struggles and sufferings.

Life presents few moments more entrancing than this first declaration of mutual love, this communion of soul, this outpouring of one heart into another, this interchange of confidence and vows, which, while it imparts a delicious sweetness to the present, entwines a wreath of hope and

rapture around the brows of coming time. No wonder that Ellen lingered over this first enchanting vision, after so many dreary months of secret sorrow: no wonder that a tear stole down her blushing cheek as she made confession of her own long-cherished attachment, and listened to the avowal of Walter's. "Dearest Ellen!" he exclaimed; "delightful as it is to hang upon your words, I cannot allow you to proceed if the recital thus distresses you. If I see another tear upon your cheek, I must positively kiss it away."

"They are tears of pleasure," was the whispering reply; "but if they give you pain I will try to check them." Even as she spoke a pearly drop stole down her cheek: her lover affectionately performed his threat; notwithstanding which, another and another still succeeded, to be chased away by the same unresisted process, as if she were determined to show that hers were truly and indeed tears of pleasure. In this intoxication of the heart she found so sweet a recompence for the suppressed misery of her recent life, that

for some time she suffered her emotions to flow unchecked ; but the stern realities of their situation, the impediments that opposed themselves to their marriage, and which were just as insuperable now as they had been before, at length forced themselves upon her unwilling recollection.

“ Alas ! dear Walter,” she sighed ; “ there may be, there is, an exquisite delight in this mutual confidence, in the dear certainty that we love each other ; but this knowledge must go no farther ; here for the present must our prospects end. Of any greater happiness—of the devotion of our lives to each other—alas ! alas ! I see but little prospect.”

“ Nay, nay, dear Ellen, speak not thus despondingly : surely we may hope.”

“ Yes, even against hope ; but I love you too well, dear Walter, to condemn you to a struggle with poverty and difficulties that might plunge us both into irretrievable ruin. You could not incur any additional expenses, however small, without diminishing the comforts of your dear mother, to which neither of us would ever consent. I am worse than

penniless, for I much fear that my poor father's increasing embarrassments, which must ultimately lead to some painful catastrophe, would inevitably involve in his downfall all those who may be connected with him;—while by our present union you would instantly sacrifice all chance of Mr. Brown's favour, whose angry denunciation of improvident marriages you have repeatedly heard."

"It is too true, all too true," sighed Walter; "and Heaven knows that I should shrink from the very thought of plunging you into quarrels, and struggles, and trials of any sort. Well, be it as you wish: for the present we will be nothing more than friends—but, oh! what dear friends shall we be! and as we have no other income, we will live upon hope. Who knows what chance or fortune may send us?"

"Chance has sent us, at all events, one happy, happy hour."

"Yes, as an earnest of many more to come; but to me there will be immediate, instant felicity in living near you,—in seeing

you every day,—in thinking of you whenever you are absent,—in knowing, in feeling, whether we are together or apart, that your heart and your affections are mine, dear Ellen, mine, mine !”

“ But we must not let it be known that we have thus plighted our troth : I would not have you run the risk of offending Mr. Brown upon any account, least of all upon mine. I had better hurry home—I feel quite equal to it now. I know not what I did, nor how I came hither. Can you forgive me for my folly—I might almost say my madness ?”

“ Dearest Ellen !” exclaimed the lover ; “ how can my lips talk of forgiveness when my heart feels nothing but unbounded gratitude and devotion ? Come ! you shall recross the common at a less perilous speed than on your last trip. Remember the happiness of my whole future life is now involved in your safety.”

“ And so is mine in yours, dear Walter, so prithee avoid the brook. Another such dreadful shock would be too much for me.”

Fortunately for Mrs. Latimer and Allan, they returned home by the fields at the back of the house, so that they heard nothing of the recent accident until, upon reaching the cottage, they received the particulars from Walter himself. Even the very thought of the danger he had incurred was almost too much for his affectionate mother, who, after fondly embracing him, hastened to her own room that she might pour forth her thanks to Heaven for his escape ; after which she set off for the Manor-House, in order to be the first to convey the happy tidings of her son's brave exploit, as well as of his safety, for he had mentioned the alarming rumours that were current.

The twins were thus left alone. Walter's disposition was in the highest degree frank and ingenuous ; hitherto he had never reserved a wish or a thought from his brother ; he felt that his heart would incessantly reproach him were he not now to impart its hopes and fears ; he foresaw no possible objection to the communication he was yearning to make ; and, premising that he had a

secret to reveal, which must be received, as it was made, in perfect confidence, he said, "Allan! this lucky day will for ever be marked in my memory with a white stone—I shall always look upon my plunge into the brook as the most fortunate occurrence of my life, not only as it saved young Harris from being drowned, but because it has led dear Ellen, who has just left the cottage, to disclose to me, in the unguarded agitation of the moment, the secret of her heart."

"Has it—has it indeed?" eagerly cried Allan, prepossessed with the notion that she was attached to himself, and had made a confidant of his brother. "Dear girl! how did it occur?—what did she say?—what led to the avowal?—Tell me every word she uttered."

"She confessed that she had long cherished a secret attachment, which had latterly become so difficult to disguise, that she had been compelled——"

"Yes—yes—I saw it—I felt it;—I myself have noticed the recent change. How singular, how fortunate, how delightful is

this anticipation ! for I had just made up my mind to speak to her on this very subject."

"She expressed a fear that you must have thought her late attentions to you rather pointed and particular."

"I did, Walter, I did; but I suspected the cause, and I need not say that I am delighted, overjoyed beyond measure, that the dear girl has acknowledged, has admitted—But how did she make the declaration? what were her exact words?"

"‘Your brother, I trust,’ (such, if I recollect rightly, were the terms she used,) ‘your brother, I trust, will excuse the seeming forwardness by which I only sought to disguise from you, from him, from everybody, even from myself if it were possible, the real state of my affections—to check, if I could, a love that I deemed hopeless, and to conceal the fact that my heart, dearest Walter, was, and ever had been, yours, and yours only.’"

"Yours, Walter, yours !" re-echoed Allan, his face suddenly reddening with deep emotion.

"Yes, mine. Had you never suspected,

never anticipated that the dear girl was always attached to me ?”

“ I know not—it never struck me. From her recent conduct, indeed, I had been rather led to infer——”

“ What ! that she had quarrelled with me ! I don’t wonder at your making that mistake, but I have already explained the motives of her avoiding me. Her seeming estrangement arose from too much love for me, not too little, dear girl ! and she fondly avowed that the pang it gave her to assume a coolness when her heart was——But you are not listening to me, Allan ; you want not to hear my lover’s nonsense : and how pale you turn ! Have you over-fatigued yourself with your walk ?”

“ No—not in the least. I was thinking that——yes——your intelligence has indeed surprised me—I was not prepared for it, and you cannot wonder at my being so deeply affected by it. What is your plan ?—how do you mean to act ? upon this subject you have told me nothing—not a word.”

“ Because we have as yet formed no plan,

decided upon nothing, except the resolution to keep our passion and our betrothal a profound secret for the present ; for we are both fully aware that our immediate marriage is entirely out of the question. I, as you well know, have nothing that can be spared ; the embarrassed state of the Captain's affairs is no secret to anybody ; and it would be madness to offend Mr. Brown, whose consent, after he has inveighed so often and so bitterly against pauper unions, as he calls them, it would be idle to expect." During this speech Allan had been walking up and down the room in an agitation of mind which he vainly endeavoured to conceal. It seemed as if he sought to allay it by locomotion, for he continued his exercise for some time in silence, then stopped suddenly and exclaimed, "So, then, you depend entirely upon the chapter of accidents ? If no fortunate event occurs, your marriage is as far off as ever ; and in the mean while you and poor Ellen are to be condemned to all the miseries of suspense."

"Such, Allan, is our present plight, which

will doubtless have its bitters as well as sweets; and, alas! I know not in what direction we are to look for the fortunate event that can alone dispel our fears and realise our hopes. Can you suggest anything that may tend to relieve us from this concealment and uncertainty?"

"Nothing just now—nothing; for my head is confused, and my feelings are too much excited to allow deliberation or thought of any kind. We will talk it over to-morrow—we will talk it over to-morrow." Which words he continued unconsciously muttering to himself, as he left the parlour and walked hastily up-stairs to his own room.

Natural enough was it that poor Allan should be absent, disturbed, a prey to contending emotions; for the life which had hitherto glided away as tranquilly as a placid river had this day been subjected to rude and ruffling agitations. The painful scene at the summer-house, and the embarrassing consequences which might result from the misrepresentations of the Captain and the anger of his disappointed daughter, had al-

ready vexed and irritated his spirit : to escape from the dilemma he had been on the point of seeking Ellen to make her an offer of his hand and heart, not doubting that it would be gladly accepted, when all his plans and hopes were utterly blighted by the discovery that he had been cruelly mistaken,—that he had been labouring under a fond delusion,—that she had declared her love for his brother, by whom her passion was reciprocated,—that they were irrevocably though secretly plighted and betrothed to each other ; and these cruel disappointments were more than enough to overwhelm the heart of any man, however firm might be his nerves.

Allan, during the sleepless night that followed the colloquy with his brother, was oppressed with a weight of woe such as he had never before experienced ; but though he might and did most deeply feel the prostration of all his hopes, his generous nature was incapable of envy or of any unworthy feeling. Not one moment did he hesitate in resolving to sacrifice his own wishes, and to forward by every means in his power the

happiness of the two beings whom he loved best upon earth—Ellen and Walter. There was a sweetness even in this surrender and abandonment of his dearest anticipations, for he felt that he should best restore his own peace of mind by securing theirs. How to accomplish this object was the question that chiefly occupied him during the night. Immediate flight from Woodcote presented itself to him as the first step that he ought to adopt, both out of consideration for himself and others; for he felt that he could not again meet either of the sisters without awakening the most distressing sensations, nor encounter the father without the hazard of an angry altercation—perhaps of a hostile collision, for he might not always be able to command his temper so successfully as he had done in that morning's interview. Let him contemplate his situation in what way he would, he still came to the conclusion that his temporary departure from home was absolutely indispensable, though whether he should fly, and what should be his future plans, he knew not. To make his

own retirement from the field establish, if possible, the felicity of Ellen and Walter, was now the paramount wish of his noble heart : how he proposed to accomplish this object will be seen in the succeeding Chapter.

CHAPTER XIII.

As Adam Brown sat in his little morning-room, posting up his account-books, the easy-chair in which he performed that office reminded him, as it had often done before, of the mysterious monk who had so uncereemoniously vaulted into Chubbs's cart. "Strange that we hear no more of that bugaboo of a fellow!" thought the merchant. "What the deuce could he want prowling about the house, staring at me through the iron gates as if I were a wild beast, and then taking to his heels like a pickpocket? If he wants his gold watch, why don't he ask for it?—wish he would;—have him then;—cross-question him a bit;—make him show how he came by it. Sha'n't give it up otherwise,—not such a fool. Nobody else comes to claim it. One would think

gold watches were as plentiful in the country as marigolds and buttercups. Wish they were,—worth walking in the fields then to hear them ticking all about you,—better fun than listening to a parcel of grasshoppers chirping.”

This reverie was broken by the sudden entrance of Allan, at sight of whom he hastily closed his books, exclaiming, as he eagerly rubbed his hands together,—his customary greeting to a welcome visitant,—

“ Ah, Allan, my boy ! you are out betimes this morning. All right, all right,—early to bed and early to rise. At Smyrna I was always up at five o’clock. Well, lad ! shall we walk down to Friar’s Field, to see whether those lazy rascals have finished the new hedge yet ? or shall we have a game of billiards before we start ? You want your revenge, I suppose, for the thrashing I gave you yesterday. That last cannon I made was a famous hit, wasn’t it ? ”

“ I shall be at your service for that or for anything else if you will first favour me with ten minutes’ conversation.”

“Ten minutes! ay, twenty, thirty, forty, if you like; so sit down and talk away.”

After having taken a chair, and hemmed two or three times to clear his throat,—for poor Allan felt the awkwardness of his mission, and was most anxious not to give offence to his somewhat hasty and irritable companion,—he said, in a subdued voice, and with a deprecating look, “I hope you will pardon me if I am taking an improper liberty in what I am about to state.—I would not, upon any account, displease you; after all your kindness to us I should be ungrateful indeed were I capable of——”

“Stuff! flummery! gammon! what’s the use of all this beating about the bush?—you know I hate it; so if you have anything to say, out with it!”

“At one time (I am sure I can never forget your generous intentions) you were kind enough to offer me a situation in your counting-house at Smyrna.”

“Which you were ass enough to refuse;—would have been a partner by this time. Well, what of that?”

"I feel that I did wrong, very wrong, to decline your proposal. I am tired of leading an idle and a useless life, and the purport of my present visit is to apprise you that I wish to leave Woodcote immediately, and to seek my fortune in some other place, —either in this country or abroad, I care not which."

"Wheugh!" whistled Brown, throwing himself back in his chair, and staring at his visitant with a look of utter amazement. "What the deuce is in the wind now? What new freak is this? What's come to the boy?"

"This resolution, I confess, has been very suddenly formed, but my mind nevertheless is quite made up to the measure. I hope you will give it your sanction; and if you could assist me by your advice, or by kindly recommending me to some appointment——"

"Not I, not I, Master Allan, depend upon it! Here's a pretty game of cross purposes and fast and loose! You *will* stay at home when I want you to go abroad.

and you *will* go abroad when I want you to stay at home:—is this your gratitude for my favours? You pretended before that you couldn't leave your mother. How comes it that you can run away from her now?"

"Walter will be left to take care of her, and she has now so kind a neighbour in yourself, that——"

"You're a pretty fellow, and a grateful young gentleman, arn't you? Because I am kind to your mother, you think fit to fly in my face, to forget all my favours, and to leave me in the lurch, just at the time that I have begun to take a pleasure in your society, and to look every day for your coming up to walk, or drive, or play billiards with me! Was there ever such a spirit of pure contradiction? Sir, I won't give my consent to your nonsensical scheme,—and that's one word for all. Ha! ha!" So saying, he snatched his cane, and thumped it with an unusual vehemence upon the floor.

"And yet, Sir," persisted Allan, "it is

what you yourself proposed to me only a very few years ago."

"Because I had a good opening for you at Smyrna; but now I have, or at least I had, other thoughts and intentions. Why, Allan, boy! you are no fool—no dolt;—you have eyes and ears,—you can see, and understand, and take a hint, and have an eye to your own interest, as well as other folks; and you must have been aware, though I never have, and never will pledge myself to anything of the sort, that I had some thoughts of making you my heir,—that is to say, on certain conditions."

"And most grateful do I feel for your generous intentions,—indeed, indeed I do, though you shake your head with such an incredulous impatience; and as to my leaving you in the lurch, just as you have begun to find me a pleasant companion,—for thus were you pleased to term me,—I shall not run away without leaving a substitute much more worthy of your favour, much better qualified than myself to execute all those little offices in which you have been pleased to employ me."

“ And pray what may be the name of this worthy deputy ? ”

“ My brother Walter ; as amiable and as excellent a creature as ever breathed, and who, I am sure, will be too happy to devote himself to your wishes in every respect.”

“ No doubt, no doubt ; and who will do me the honour, I suppose, to succeed to my fortune and estate, if I might ask so trifling a favour of him.”

“ That must of course depend entirely upon yourself ; but I venture to assert that whatever your liberality had intended to bestow upon me would be better conferred and more amply merited by him.”

“ Indeed ! and so you wish Walter, do you, to stand in your shoes ? ”

“ Nothing would delight me more, though I repeat that I have no right to ask or to expect anything of the sort.”

“ And what mess of pottage are you to get, Mister Esau, for thus selling the reversion of your expectations to your brother ? ”

“ Nothing whatever beyond the hope of doing him a most essential service, which to me would be the greatest of all pleasures.”

“ Allan Latimer, you *are* a fool, a dolt, an idiot, though I said just now that you were not: but have your own way, Sir, have your own way. I am willing to grant you one half of your request, for I will never have a jackass for my heir,—a blockhead who doesn't know the value of money, who would make ducks and drakes of my property,—send everything to the dogs: and so, Sir, I shall make an immediate alteration in my will, by omitting altogether the name of one Allan Latimer, who is such a born idiot as not to know on which side his bread is buttered.”

“ I must submit to your displeasure, although nothing could be further from my thoughts than any wish to incur it; but I hope, dear Sir, you will remember that Walter is free from offence, and that he richly deserves——”

“ Don't tell me,—don't presume to dictate

to me,—hold your tongue,—I won't hear you. I know what *you* richly deserve, you thankless young jackanapes, and you shall have it. Away with you!—quit the room instantly, and never let me see your face again! Not a word, Sir, not a word! What! isn't this my own house? Begone, I tell you! Ha! ha!" So saying, he rang the bell violently, and Allan, seeing that in his present chafing mood all further expostulation would be vain, made him a respectful bow, and sorrowfully quitted the apartment.

Totally unaccustomed to discord and wrangling, which were indeed peculiarly repugnant to his nature, and sincerely attached to Mr. Brown, it may well be supposed that Allan, whose feelings had already been painfully excited, did not leave the Manor-House in any very enviable frame of mind. Even in this aggravation of his annoyances, however, he found some little satisfaction from reflecting that the more the merchant was alienated from himself, the greater was the chance that he

would transfer his regards and his favours to his brother. He had set his heart upon accomplishing the happiness of Ellen and Walter, in the attainment of which object he was not only willing but eager to sacrifice his own.

Thus cogitating, he suddenly encountered his brother as he re-entered the cottage, when he told him in a hurried and agitated manner that, having had an unfortunate difference with Captain Molloy, as well as with Mr. Brown, he intended to withdraw himself for a short time from home, earnestly entreating his auditor to cultivate the friendship of the latter by every means in his power, as he would thus, in all probability, secure his ultimate sanction, and perhaps obtain some adequate provision, for the marriage with Ellen. As soon as Walter had recovered from the first amazement excited by his tidings, he began to cross-question him as to the cause of the dissension with the parties named, and the motives of his sudden flight from Woodcote,—interrogatories from which Allan could only

escape by pleading the necessity of making immediate preparations for his journey, and by hurrying off to his room. Enough, however, had transpired, for he was a bad hand at concealments or evasions, to awaken the suspicions of his brother, who, knowing his generous, disinterested, and affectionate nature, began to surmise the real state of the case.

With these impressions he hastened across the common to consult with his betrothed, not displeased at having so early an opportunity of showing the confidence he placed in her judgment, and of proving that he now considered their interests to be identical. "Noble-minded, great-hearted Allan!" exclaimed Ellen, when she had heard his statement: "I fear, indeed, that he has been sacrificing his own views and hopes to promote ours. Yes—I feel confident that you have divined his real motives. But, dear Walter! this must not—cannot—shall not be. Even if his generous wishes in our favour were to be realised, how could we consent to be benefited at his expense? how could we be

made happy by his exile and impoverishment? Impossible!"

"Precisely my own feelings, dear Ellen, though I would not give utterance to them until I had learnt your sentiments. How would you then recommend me to act, so as to detain Allan at home?—for I cannot bear the thought of his leaving us."

"See Mr. Brown immediately, and endeavour to effect his reconciliation with your brother."

"You advise me, dearest Ellen, just as I should have anticipated—with all the generosity and unselfishness of a true woman; and I trust that our sentiments may ever accord as entirely as they do now. I will hasten to the Manor-House at once, for Allan seemed to meditate a quick departure."

Most inauspicious was the moment when the kind-hearted mediator was ushered into the same little room from which his brother had so recently been ejected, for Adam Brown, who had ever since been nursing his resentment to keep it warm, had perfectly succeeded in his enchainment process. "I hope,

Sir, you will excuse the great liberty—"hesitated Walter, hardly knowing how to open so delicate a subject with so touchy a negotiator.

"Why, that's just the way your brother began," growled the merchant; "so I suppose you have some equally insulting proposition to submit to me. But harkye, Sir—it's right to let you know that I am in no humour to be bothered or bamboozled. What's the matter? what do you want? I heard all about your sousing into the brook: more fool you! Are *you* going to run away as well as your brother?—and if you are, what's that to me?—Off with you both!—Good riddance of bad rubbish."

"Indeed, Sir, I have no such intention. My brother, I fear, has been so unfortunate as to incur your anger and displeasure."

"How dare you suppose," demanded Brown, reddening with choler, "that I care enough about him to be angry? Sirrah! I'd have you to know that I never was better pleased—never was more gratified—never was more calm and placid in the whole

course of my life. Deuce take the block-head ! what the devil does he mean by running away from home ?”

“ Of that I know little more than yourself, but I still hope to turn him from his purpose, especially if I can prevail upon you to overlook his hasty determination, and to pardon any liberties or indiscretions of which he may have been guilty in his late interview.”

“ Liberties indeed—you may well say that !”

“ I suspect, Sir, that his brotherly affection may have perhaps led him to——”

“ Go on, Sir, go on—you’re quite right—quite on the right scent. Yes, Sir,—in his blind regard for you, and still blinder ingratitude towards me, he had the modesty to propose that whatever future favours I might have destined for himself should be transferred to you !”

“ I feared it—I knew it—I was sure of it. Generous, generous Allan ! O Sir ! let me implore you to forget, to forgive, an act of self-sacrifice which, however mag-

nanimous I may deem it, may appear in your eyes——”

“Come, come ; I don’t want any of your rantipole heroics—I want to understand it. Tell me the meaning of it all. What’s the premium, the money down, the con-sid-eration for this attempted barter of my friendship and favour ?”

“Sir, we are both equally incapable of devising any such compact among ourselves, or of taking any such unwarrantable liberty with you ; and one object of my present visit is to declare, as I do most unequivocally, that, even if you should be induced to make any diversion of your present or future favours, I would never consent to receive them at the expense of my brother.”

“How vastly considerate !—how particularly kind of you !—but you needn’t cry out afore you’re hurt. Perhaps you’ll wait till I ask you—wait long enough if you do. Zooks, Sir ! what right have you, or he, or any man, to fancy you can play at battle-dore and shuttlecock with my guineas ? Am I a fellow to be hoodwinked like a tame

hawk, or led by the nose like a dancing bear, or wheedled like a soft tommy, or plucked like a pigeon? Am I a fellow, I ask you, to be cajoled or cozened? Zounds, Sir! is a man of my age to be dictated to by a couple of ungrateful boys?"

"I have not presumed to dictate anything—I have merely disclaimed——"

"Well, Sir, that's dictation. What right have you to disclaim? Don't be afraid, don't be afraid: you will have no favours of mine to disclaim—that you may depend on."

"May I then venture to hope that Allan——"

"You may venture to hope nothing, and then you won't be disappointed," cried Brown, starting from his chair in high dudgeon. "As to Allan, he may go to the devil his own way, as I have already told him; and if you choose to accompany or to follow him, you are perfectly welcome. Good morning, Sir, good morning: I wish you both a pleasant journey. There I had you. Ha! ha!" The usual double rap of

his cane closed the sentence, and his hasty retreat from the room put an end to the colloquy, while the sharp striking of the ferrule, which continued for some time audible, attested his undiminished anger and indignation.

In fact, he was not only enraged but bewildered, which latter feeling rather aggravated the former. "If I could but understand what the fools are at," thought he, "what they mean, what they're driving at, I shouldn't mind it; but to be bamboozled with a puzzle which I can't help guessing at and can't find out, is enough to provoke a saint."

To the money-reverencing merchant the conduct of the twins did indeed seem an inscrutable mystery, only to be solved by supposing some total revolution to have occurred in the moral, or rather the financial, world. "Here have I," he soliloquised, as he walked rapidly up and down, "been toiling and moiling, and drudging and trudging from Smyrna to Constantinople and Alexandria and London, and back again

to Smyrna,—fagging early and late,—running all sorts of risks,—and tumbling overboard and injuring my health, to scrape together a fortune which these two young jackasses are turning up their noses at, and kicking away from them. Surely the world's coming to an end, or else the people are all going mad. And here am I, getting an old man, without anybody to whom I can leave my property. I shall have to advertise, I suppose——‘Wanted an heir—lots of money to be given away, with an allowance to those who take a quantity.—N.B. Persons applying must carry it off the premises at their own expense.’ Things are come to a pretty pass, truly!”

Allan, in the mean while, remained in his own room making hasty preparations for his departure,—a process which he was compelled, such was the distraction of his thoughts, to recommence several times, and which after all was accomplished in a very slovenly manner. The chief perplexity that disturbed him, although many other vexations clouded his mind, was the pain of

leaving his mother without a formal farewell and an explanation of his reasons, and the fear that, if he confessed his intended flight, he should be unable to resist her affectionate remonstrances against it. Besides, how could he make confessions upon such delicate subjects without compromising both himself and others? or how could his mother, with all her tenderness and sympathy, enter into the feelings by which his bosom was lacerated? No, he would leave behind him a letter holding forth a prospect of an early return, and he would trust all the rest to the redoubled attentions and the kindly mediation of Walter, upon whose filial as well as fraternal good offices he knew he might implicitly rely.

Such were his resolutions when he was summoned to the family prayers, which were read every night, as well as morning, by Mrs. Latimer, who upon this occasion thought it right to record her devout gratitude for Walter's recent escape by adding the special thanksgiving for deliverance from any great danger. Overcome by her feel-

ings, the fond mother was hardly able to conclude it; her voice faltered, her hand shook, and the gathering tears that had obscured her vision at length fell fast upon the book. Now was it that poor Allan felt all the difficulty of concealing his intended flight,—of resolving to tear himself away, even for a time, from so devoted a parent, from such a household of love. His bosom heaved, his mouth was slightly convulsed, his eyes became suffused; and as he received his mother's good night, kiss, and blessing, he fell upon her neck, and sobbed outright with uncontrollable emotion.

After a miserable night he arose with the first dawn of day, snatched up the light portmanteau which he had prepared overnight, walked across the fields to Chubbs's farm, and, ere the first rays of the sun had yet struggled through the misty morning vapours, was seated in the market-cart, and jogging towards Cheltenham, giving but vacant and irrelevant answers to John's questions as to the cause of his taking so unexpected and so untimely a journey. Just

as they reached the town he saw a stage-coach on the point of starting, when, without inquiring its destination, he tossed his port-manteau into the boot, climbed to the roof, nodded his thanks to Chubbs, and in another minute was whirling rapidly along the road towards London.

END OF VOL. I.

